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Tarlac newspaperman shot dead in his jeep by armed men

■ METRO / A17
Call center employee shot in the head by cellphone thieves in Pasig

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Makati judge picked to handle Subic rape case vs US Marines

■ NEWS / A3
Body of missing Filipina found; death toll now 58

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Stars to 'fall like rain' midnight of April 21

By Blanche S. Rivera

IT MAKES NO DIFFERence who you are. Soon, opponents of President Macapagal-Arroyo who may have been wishing for nearly a year for certain things to happen can make all the wishes they want.

STARS/ A6

SC decision clears way for Vizcaya mining project

By Armand N. Nocum, Christine Gaylican and Blanche S. Rivera

AN AUSTRALIAN MINING COMPANY HAS HURdled a legal challenge that had held up a copper-gold mining project in the country for more than a decade.

The Supreme Court dismissed a suit that sought to stop Arimco Mining Corp. and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

SC DECISION/ A15

Borra says cheating marred 2004 polls

Comelec fund lack may derail Cha-cha

By Philip C. Tubeza, Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning

THE CHARTER CHANGE TRAIN of the Arroyo administration via a people's initiative may not reach its destination because of financial and legal obstacles, according to a senior official of the Commission on Elections.

Election Commissioner Resurreccion Borra yesterday said the Comelec finance services department had estimated that verifying the signatures for the people's initiative alone would cost P1 billion while a plebiscite on any proposed amendments would cost P2.6 billion.

At a Senate hearing, Borra said the poll body had no budget for the verification process, adding that many of its employees were verifying the signatures without getting paid.

He also said the Comelec would need "not less than six months" to prepare for a plebiscite.

"You know, Your Honor, an adequate preparation for any political exercise nationwide in scope [will take] not less than six months," Borra said.

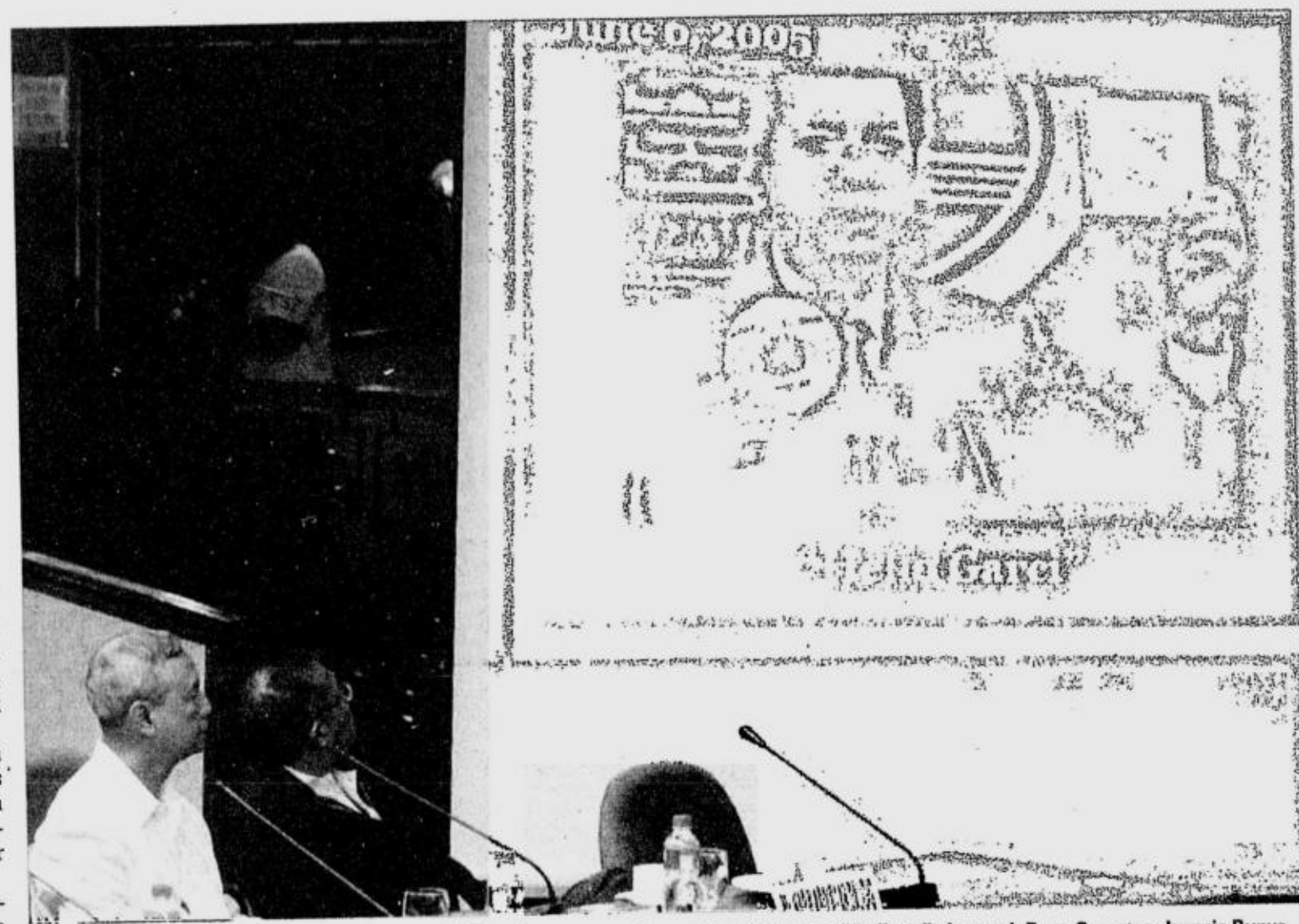
Asked by Sen. Rodolfo Biazon about Speaker Jose de Venecia's claim that a new Constitution could be in place by July 15, Borra said: "That is impossible, Your Honor."

De Venecia earlier said the verification of signatures would be completed by April 15 so that a plebiscite could be scheduled for June to ratify the shift to a parliamentary form of government.

He said an "interim parliament" would be convened in July to continue the process of amending the Constitution.

Sigaw ng Bayan, a coalition of 100 civic and nongovernment organizations, has claimed that it has collected more than 6 million signatures—over 12 percent of the total number of registered

COMELEC/ A6



ROGER MARGALLO

ELECTION Commissioner Resurrecçion Borra (right) and management consultant Hermenegildo Estrella Jr. watch Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye reveal the existence of the "Hello Garci" discs in June last year, on a videoscreen during the Senate inquiry on the wiretapping controversy yesterday.

IN THE KNOW

Comelec verification of signatures

THE PROCESS OF VERIFICATION INVOLVES the following steps:

- City or municipal election registrars verify signatures submitted to them in relation to the people's initiative for amending the 1987 Constitution. The signatures must be accompanied by a request for verification.

The verification process involves checking whether the signatories are really registered voters in a particular barangay, and matching the signatures against those in the voters' registration record.

The Commission on Elections' Election Records and Statistics Department is in charge of certifying the number of registered voters in each legislative district.

- After verification by each city or municipal election office, the list of signatories will be returned to the proponent. The verified list will then be affixed to the petition, which will then be filed in the Comelec's main office.

IN THE KNOW/ A6

Fraud not 'massive,' Senate body told

By TJ Burgonio, Philip C. Tubeza and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

NEARLY TWO YEARS after the 2004 balloting, the Senate yesterday heard testimony from an election commissioner that cheating had occurred during the polling and from analysts who claimed that after the "Hello Garci" phone calls, the votes for President Macapagal-Arroyo's nearest rival dwindled.

Election Commissioner Resurreccion Borra, testifying before a Senate committee looking into the wiretapped conversations, admitted that while the balloting was marred by irregularities, he did not think these were done on a "massive" scale.

It was the first time that a Commission on Elections official acknowledged that shenanigans had taken place during the balloting, but Borra also stressed that not only one side had cheated. "It was not done by one party or one candidate alone. It was endemic," he later told reporters.

"Whether in the Comelec or political parties or candidates, even in our own citizens' arm, there are Judases," Borra said at the hearing.

When he said that Judas had hanged himself, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon countered: "If we follow that standard, do we have enough ropes?"

Borra retorted: "They can jump from tall buildings and drown themselves in the river."

BORRA/ A6

Thai PM considers quitting after poll protest vote

BANGKOK—THAI PRIME MINISter Thaksin Shinawatra said on Monday he would set up a group of eminent persons to seek a way out of the country's political crisis, and would quit if the group recommended he do so.

"My idea is to set up an independent commission ... to try to find a way out of the deadlock," Thaksin said in a television interview a day after Thai voters gave him a major slap in the face in a snap election that failed to resolve a months-long crisis.

"If this committee tells me to resign, I would obey," he said.

Thaksin said he was willing to set up a neutral committee composed of three former prime ministers, three former Supreme Court chairmen and three former heads of Parliament to represent different points of view in the crisis, which revolves around demands by his critics that he step down because of alleged corruption and abuse of power.

But he said if his political opponents rejected the creation of such a committee, he would try to convene Parliament and form a new government.

Thaksin said that his party gained more than 50 percent of the popular vote in Thailand's general election, although its vote total declined from last year's polls.

Thaksin had vowed before the polls to step down if his party received less than 50 percent of the votes cast. A Thai television station's own tally of the vote earlier Monday had indicated that his Thai Rak Thai—Thai Love Thai—party had received 44.4 percent of the popular vote nationwide in Sunday's general

THAI/ A15

Triplets in 2-3-4 finish

By DJ Yap

BLESSINGS COME IN THREES for the parents of 15-year-old triplets Gerome, Germond and Geroni Hipolito.

On April 1, the boys marched—one after the other—as salutatorian, first honorable mention and second honorable mention at their graduation at the Ponciano Bernardo High School (PBHS) in Cubao, Quezon City.

In their class of 170 students,

TRIPLETS/ A15

JOAN BONDOC

TRIPLE SCORE: The Hipolito triplets (from left) Gerome, Germond and Geroni display their medals for finishing second, third and fourth in the graduating class of Ponciano Bernardo Elementary School in Quezon City.

Filipino wins int'l horror film festival

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Entertainment

ANOTHER FILIPINO FILM—OF THE HORROR genre—howled victory in Brussels.

Yam Laranas' "Sigaw" won the Orbit Award at the 24th Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Film (BIFFF), held in Belgium on March 10-25.

Laranas, who directed and co-wrote the movie, is in Manila working on a TV commercial. He learned of the good news only after reading about it on the website of Variety, a Hollywood trade paper.

The BIFFF is "considered the world's biggest festival of horror, fantasy and science fiction films," Laranas told the INQUIRER in a

FILIPINO/ A15

"SIGAW" director Yam Laranas

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 2006

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Second FRONTPAGE

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/04/03/06

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Subic rape goes to '139' judge

By Tarra V. Quismundo

SUSPENSE FILLED THE MAKATI COURTROOM as the roulette wheel continued to spin. The judges and onlookers held their breath. Then cheers and applause erupted when the pointer stopped at number 139.

Branch 139 Judge Benjamin Pozon of the Makati Regional Trial Court, however, was not around to pick up his assignment as he had filed a leave of absence the day before to last until April 16.

What Pozon had won was the job of presiding over the trial of the four US Marines accused of raping a Filipino woman at the Subic Bay Freeport on Nov. 1 last year, a case that was moved out of Olongapo City for lack of a judge qualified to hear it.

Olongapo City RTC Judge Renato Dilag had inhibited himself from the case after the victim's lawyer pointed out that Dilag's son had worked for the law firm representing one of the suspects, Staff Sgt. Chad Brian Carpentier. The other suspects are Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood, Daniel Smith and Dominic Duplantis.

The two other Olongapo judges were disqualified for other reasons.

The Supreme Court then ordered the case moved to Makati City, whose RTCs had relatively low case loads compared to other courts.

Pozon's absence, however, did not pose a problem, according to Makati RTC Executive Judge Sixto Marella Jr., "because he'll be back anyway after Holy Week. If between now and then there is an urgent matter that has to be addressed, then it will be presented to the pairing judge."

Marella was referring to Branch 140 Judge Leticia Morales, Pozon's designated reliever. Morales, however, was also on leave since early last month and was not expected back until after the Holy Week, her staff said.

"Now if it so happens that the pairing judge is also not available, then I come in as executive judge. I can act on any urgent matter which will come in between," said Marella, who presided over yesterday afternoon's re-raffle.

Handling the Subic rape case will be a first for Pozon, 53, a law graduate of the University of the East who joined the Makati RTC in December 2003 after serving as a judge in the Taguig Metropolitan Trial Court.

"This is the first time for him to handle a rape case. If there's an order from the DOJ to hold marathon hearings for the case, then we would," said Branch 139 clerk of court Liza Marie Picardal.

WHEEL OF JUSTICE: And the winner is... RTC Branch 139 Presiding Judge Benjamin T. Pozon. REM ZAMORA

The Subic rape case would be in addition to the nearly 700 cases Pozon is handling, a case load that includes a four-year backlog, the length of time Branch 139 was without a judge.

"All of these is a matter of case management, scheduling of hearings. What is important is that the presiding judge gets the cooperation of all parties. That way, postponements and cancellations of hearings will be minimized, if not totally eliminated," Marella told reporters.

Prior to his latest assignment, the biggest case handled by Pozon was the illegal detention case filed against former National Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Samuel Ong, actor Rez Cortez and two others for allegedly holding military intelligence agent TSgt. Vidal Doble against his will at the San Carlos Seminary in Makati in June last year.

Ong, who remains in hiding, had sought sanctuary at the seminary after exposing what he called "the mother of all tapes" – audio recordings that purportedly proved that President Macapagal-Arroyo's had cheated in the May 2004 elections.

Marella said he was confident Pozon would be able to handle the controversial rape case, which would surely put him in the spotlight.

"He is a very efficient judge," Marella said.

A fellow judge, Napoleon Inoturan, seconded: "He is a very diligent judge. He works even on Saturdays."

CA paves way for Maliksi suspension

By Armand N. Nocum

THE COURT OF APPEALS has lifted the preliminary injunction it earlier issued in favor of Cavite Gov. Erineo "Ayong" Maliksi, paving the way for his six-month suspension because of graft and corruption charges.

Cavite Vice Gov. Johnvic Remulla had filed the charges against Maliksi before the Ombudsman for the alleged 'ghost purchase' of P7.5-million worth of rice last year.

In a 25-page decision, the appellate court said there was no obstacle for the Office of the Ombudsman [so it could now] implement Maliksi's suspension.

CA Presiding Justice Ruben Reyes penned the decision in response to a motion for reconsideration filed by the Office of the Ombudsman and Remulla.

"Petitioner's (Maliksi) estimation on how the office of the Ombudsman acts on complaints filed with its office is based, at most, on perception, or at worst, on conjecture. It is plainly speculative. The Office of the Ombudsman deserves the presumption of regularity in the performance of its functions, absent clear and convincing evidence to the contrary," the CA said.

The appellate court added that Maliksi should present all his evidence to counter the charges against him before the OMB, which has jurisdiction to hear his case.

Is military coup good for RP? Opinions split, says SWS poll

OPINIONS ARE SPLIT ON whether removing President Macapagal-Arroyo by a military coup would be good for the country, according to the most recent Social Weather Stations survey conducted on March 8-14.

The survey showed over one-third (36%) of respondents favoring the ouster of the President by a military action while another third (35%) was opposed to this and the remaining 29% chose not to take sides.

The split opinion was the result of a geographical divide, according to SWS, with Metro Manila and Mindanao (both net +9) being slightly in favor of a coup, the Visayas (net –14) opposed to one, and the rest of Luzon (net zero) neutral as far as toppling Ms Arroyo through the military route was concerned. The sentiments of the various socioeconomic classes towards a coup were also equally neutral.

The survey also showed "strong direct relationships between public dissatisfaction with the performance of the President and the desire for her to be toppled, regardless of the way for this to come about."

Those dissatisfied with her were moderately in favor of a military coup, with a net agreement of +18. Meanwhile, those who were satisfied with her were strongly against it (net –26).

The same survey showed almost half of Filipinos (48%) agreeing that the removal of the President through people power would be good for the country, while only 44% favored Ms Arroyo's resignation—a dip from last December's majority 58%. Opposition to resignation rose to 23% in March from 17% in December.

The sentiments of all the socioeconomic classes were predominantly in favor of either people power or resignation, the survey showed.

The survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. It was conducted after the declaration of a state of national emergency (Feb. 24 to March 3) and the standoff at Marine headquarters at Fort Bonifacio on Feb. 26. *Kate Pedroso, PDI Research*

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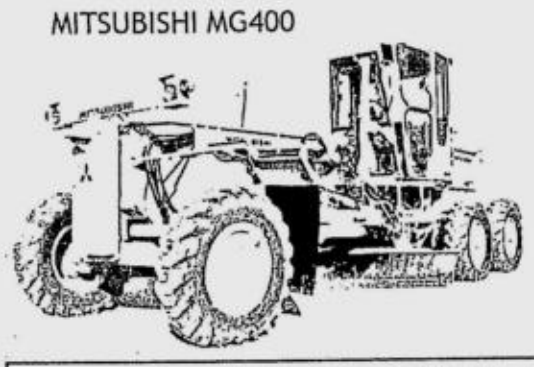

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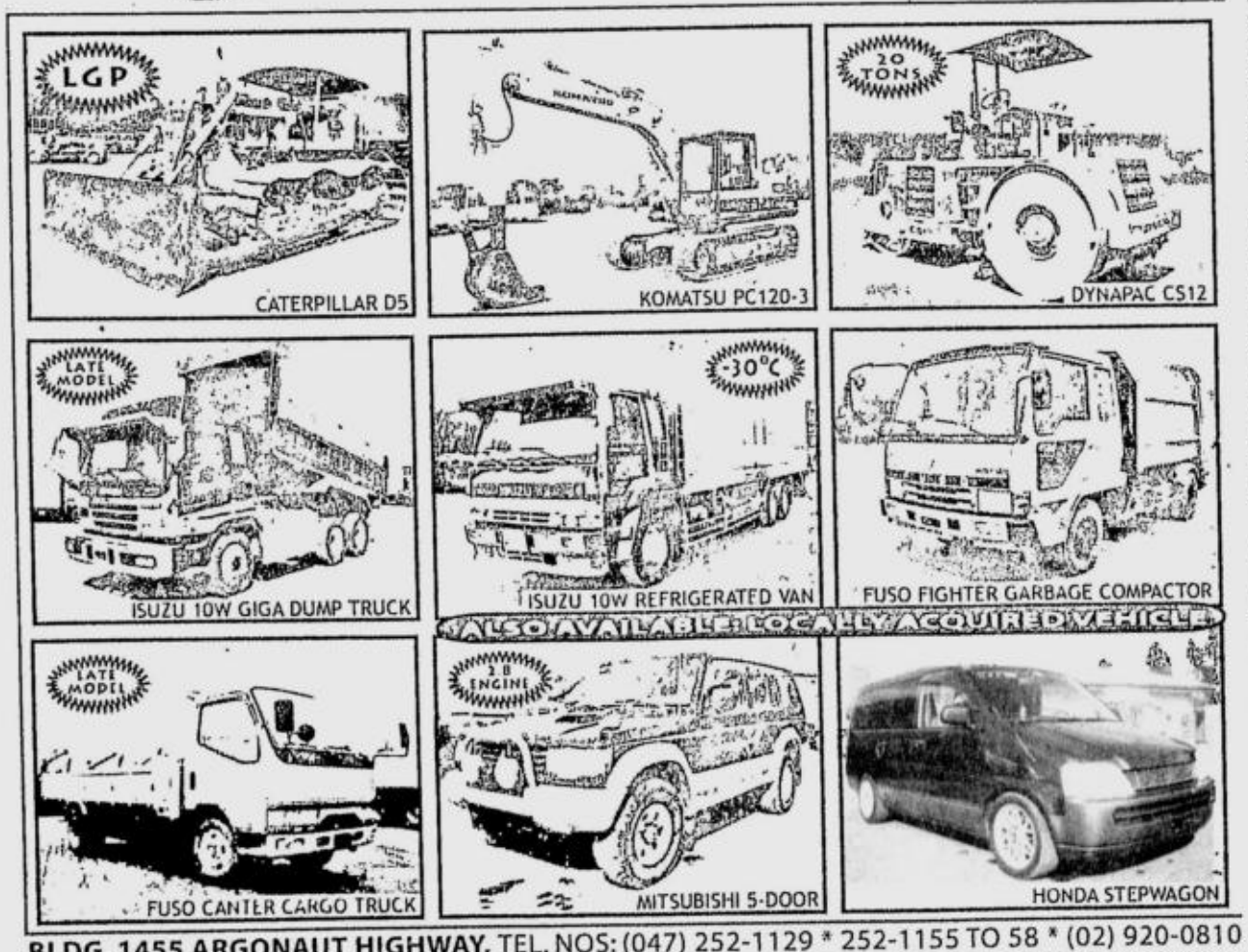

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Israel plans monument for Filipinos

ISRAEL IS HONORing the compassionate Filipinos of the late '30s and '40s who gave refuge to Jews fleeing the Nazis during World War II, by erecting a monument befitting "Righteous" nations.

Philippine Ambassador to Tel Aviv Antonio Modena said the monument will be built by the city government of Rishon Lezzion along the "Avenue of the Righteous Among Nations" within the city's 65-hectare Holocaust Memorial Park.

It will remind Israelis of the "humanitarian role of the Philippines, particularly President Manuel L. Quezon and the Filipino people," in saving a group of Jews from the Nazi pogrom in 1939, Modena noted.

The proposed structure will be located on a hill, a "prominent site" between the Memorial's main monument and another which commemorates Jews who fought against the Nazis, the diplomat said.

According to Modena, Rishon Lezzion Mayor Meir Nitzan himself has suggested that the monument's design or motif should come from the Philippines.

US giving Manila P6.7B in aid this year

By Volt Contreras

DESPITE ITS OWN BALLOONing budget deficit, its mounting expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan and its costly reconstruction efforts after hurricane Katrina, Washington is giving Manila some P6.7 billion in aid this year.

This was how the Philippine Embassy in Washington yesterday underscored the assistance package that the United States is extending to the country in 2006, drawing attention to the post's successful efforts to lobby for a higher aid amount amid America's growing expenditures.

From the $92.7 million that was originally proposed in the US Congress, total assistance for the Philippines this year will reach $131.2 million, "slightly more" than what it provided in 2005, Philippine Ambassador to the US Albert del Rosario reported yesterday.

Of the $131.2 million, up to $58 million will go into the country's defense programs, including military training and equipment upgrade, law enforcement and the campaign against terrorism.

Another $25 million will be set aside for projects in support of the Mindanao peace process. Del Rosario said the US Congress had assured him that more assistance would be forthcoming once the government concluded a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Other items in the aid menu include child survival and health ($21.4 million), development assistance ($21.5 million), narcotics control ($2 million) and Peace Corps projects ($2.9 million).

"Notwithstanding the prevailing intense efforts in the US government to rein in the budget, there remains a considerable level of goodwill for the Philippines as manifested in the increased level of assistance," Del Rosario said.

Romulo flies to Tokyo to seek aid for South

FOREIGN SECRETARY ALBERTO Romulo flew to Japan yesterday saying he would seek aid for the restive Muslims in Mindanao and discuss the welfare of migrant Filipino workers.

Romulo said in his departure statement he would hold talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso on "how we can further advance our shared agenda of peace and development for the countryside and in the southern Philippines."

Tokyo is Manila's top aid donor, contributing $9.4 billion in official development assistance over the past 23 years, according to the Japanese Embassy.

Manila is hoping to line up Tokyo as a key contributor to a multilateral development fund for the rebellion-torn southern Philippines after it strikes a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in talks being hosted by Malaysia.

Romulo said he would also seek to add to existing safeguards for the more than 100,000 Filipinos working in Japan, mostly as entertainers in nightclubs.

He said he would "explore the possibilities of improved cooperation in consular and labor matters." *AFP*

'Mama went to Heaven'

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY – "SI MAMA NAGKADTO SA Heaven. Gindala ni Papa Jesus. (Mama went to Heaven. She was taken by Papa Jesus)."

This is what three-year-old Jules Archangel Dunca keeps on telling his grandmother Edna Aboboto.

The boy has been told that his mother, Queenie Aboboto-Dunca, was among the four Filipinos who drowned last week when a leisure boat sank off the coast of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. But the boy does not understand his mother is not coming back alive, according to Aboboto.

When the INQUIRER came to visit, the boy appeared oblivious to the grief around him. Jules would even tell his relatives that he hoped his mother would bring home many toys when she came home.

He was excited to show her his achievement ribbons in nursery school, especially those for best in math and honesty as well as for being active and well-groomed.

But Queenie, 31, would be coming home in a box. She was one of three Filipinos employed by the floating restaurant Al-Dana which capsized and sank off Bahrain last March 30. *(See separate story)*.

The family is still waiting for word from the DFA and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration on the repatriation of Queenie's remains.

Meanwhile, neighbors and relatives have flocked to the family residence in Barangay Dulonan in Arevalo District here to condole with the family.

"She (was) so generous and helpful, that is why she is loved by her friends and our neighbors," said her mother Edna Aboboto, 51.

Queenie, called Neneng by her mother, left for Bahrain last Jan. 4, leaving her job of 10 years as a clerk at the Permits and Licensing Division at the Iloilo City Hall.

She had also worked in the guidance and counseling office of a school and as a sales clerk at a department store after she finished her psychology course at the University of San Agustin here.

"As a single mother, she wanted to earn more to ensure a better future for her son," said her cousin and close friend, Ma. Cheque Nales. "She wanted to show that she can raise her son on her own despite many sacrifices and hardships."

Queenie's family depended on her earnings and that of her father, Roldan, who works as a janitor at the Central Bank office in Iloilo City.

"I am leaving not for myself but for my son and our family," Queenie told her mother before she left.

She first worked as tutor to the children of a Bahraini couple from the middle of January. But she left after around two weeks because her employer berated her and did not treat the children well, according to her relatives.

The agency that hired her, Fil-HR, offered to provide her with a job on the leisure boat.

Edna said Queenie started working on the boat on Feb. 23 and assisted students who were on tour.

When she last called her mother on March 27, Queenie was excited about the prospects of earning more this summer.

"She was expecting more tourists, which would mean more tips. She promised to send us money," said Edna.

Queenie had also wanted to help finish the construction of their two-bedroom bungalow after paying off her debts.

"Neneng had many plans especially for her son and for us, and I can't understand why this happened," said Edna.

THREE-YEAR-OLD Jules Archangel Dunca (left) holds a graduation picture of his mother, Queenie Aboboto-Dunca (right), who drowned when the leisure boat Al Dana sank off Bahrain on March 30. ARNOLD ALMACEN, PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

Body of missing Filipina found; death toll now 58

MANAMA – THE BODY OF A FILIPINA waitress missing in the wake of the sinking of a leisure boat off the coast of Bahrain has been found, raising the death toll to 58, Bahraini state television said Sunday.

It said that rescue operations had ended after the retrieval of the woman's body.

In Manila, the Department of Foreign Affairs confirmed the fourth Filipino fatality and identified her as Nenita Jacob Bari, a member of the crew of the pleasure boat Al-Dana which capsized and sank off Bahrain last March 30. It declined to give further details about Bari in deference to her family's wishes.

Officials in Bahrain said six Filipinos perished in the tragedy, but DFA spokesman Gilberto Asuque said the Philippine Embassy in Manama had confirmed only four at press time.

Three Filipinos were reported dead earlier, namely Norman Belardo, Edwin Felipe Batacan and Queenie Aboboto Dunca.

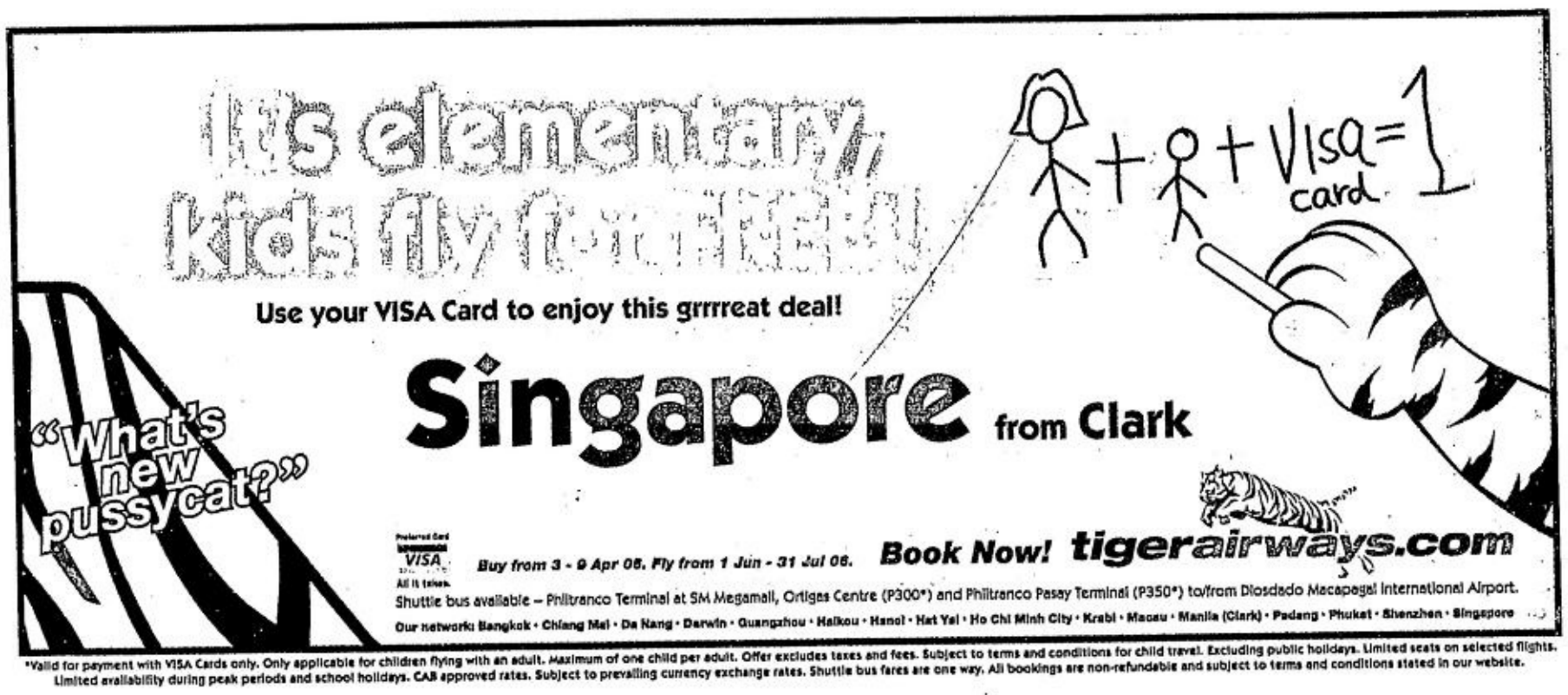
Bari and Dunca were two of the vessel's three Filipino crew members, the DFA said. Their third co-worker Lanette Salgado, survived the accident.

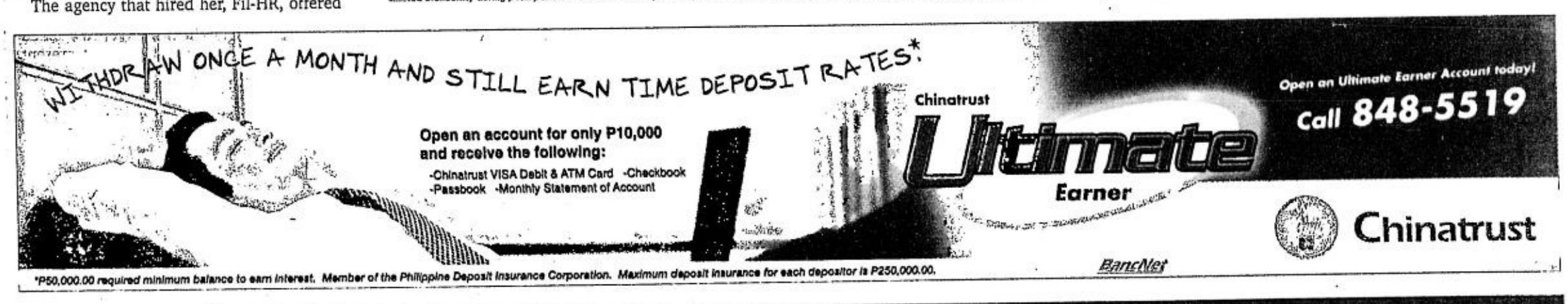
Belardo and Batacan's remains were expected to arrive in the country within the week.

Questions mounted over the seaworthiness of a traditional vessel packed with foreigners, amid charges the boat was never meant to put to sea. The dead included Indians, Britons, South Africans, Filipinos, Singaporeans, Pakistanis, Thais, a German, an Irish and a South Korean.

Coast guard chief Colonel Yussef al-Ghatim told reporters Saturday that the boat was inaugurated last month on the premise that it was "a floating restaurant, not a passenger vessel." It appeared also that the boat did not have a captain and was operated by an Indian deckhand, who is still being interrogated by police.

The traditional wooden boat, known as a banoosh, had been chartered for a company dinner cruise when it capsized almost two kilometers out to sea. *AFP with a report from Volt Contreras*





GMA backs fixed terms for AFP, PNP chiefs to insulate them from politics

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

AFTER EMPLOYING A REVOLVING-DOOR policy in the appointment of military and police chiefs under her administration, President Macapagal-Arroyo is now endorsing a proposal to fix the terms of the military and police top brass to insulate them from political games and maneuvers.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said at a news briefing that the President supported proposals to give the Armed Forces chief of staff and the Philippine National Police chief fixed terms.

"We believe that a fixed term will serve the best interest of the organization and its mission," said Bunye. "The overall objective of this is to have professionalism and redirect these two important agencies away from politics. It will not be beneficial if we have a new AFP chief of staff or PNP chief every so often."

The President has had eight AFP chiefs of staff and four PNP chiefs since she took power in 2001, not to mention naming over 50 retired military officers to civilian posts.

When asked if the President was not politicking in her military appointments, Bunye said: "There are lot of people involved in the selection, and the critical factors here are the terms and conditions."

Bunye said the President has always seen to it that only the best and most qualified were appointed.

Bunye said Malacañang would leave it to Congress to decide how long the terms of the AFP and PNP chiefs should be in order to maintain stability and ensure effectiveness.

Meanwhile, Director General Arturo Lomibao said yesterday he believed a one-year term for the PNP chief was adequate but he intended to survey PNP members to determine what their thoughts were.

Talking with reporters, Lomibao pointed out that he has been in office for exactly a year now, and "I think it (a one-year term) is adequate enough."

The police, according to him, would conduct a survey among senior and junior officers to find out the "institutional stand" of the organization on the length of the PNP's chief's term.

Based on the law, the PNP chief's term must not exceed four years, Lomibao said.

"But this has never been implemented, and this should be the subject of a study not only by legislators," he said, adding there was a need to consult people who would be affected to most, such as police officers and local government units.

Administration Representatives Luis Bersamin and Amado Espino had proposed fixed terms for the AFP and PNP chiefs. Bersamin also suggested ending the practice of politicians choosing the town, city or provincial police commander. *With a report from Luige A. del Puerto*

Motor boat with 11 people aboard missing

THE PHILIPPINE COAST guard, backed by at least one Air Force helicopter, continued searching the Mindoro Strait yesterday for a motor boat reported missing since last Friday with 11 people aboard, the Coast Guard said.

The boat, which carried eight passengers and a crew of three, had left San Jose, Occidental Mindoro at 4 a.m. last Friday and was reported missing after it failed to arrive at its destination in Coron, Palawan, on a trip that was supposed to have lasted three hours, according to Coast Guard spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Coyme.

The passengers were employees of the M4 Construction and Maintenance Services, Inc., a contractor of Smart Communications Inc., a Coast Guard statement said. It identified them as Arvin Dalisay, Ruelito Javier, Roule Magtibay, Russel Claveria, Ben Velasquez, Reynaldo Montery, Ronaldo Gilmar and Monolito Velasquez. The three crewmen were not identified.

The Coast Guard was conducting search-and-rescue operations off San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, and off Tara Island in Busuanga, Palawan, Coyme said, adding that a Philippine Air Force helicopter from the 505th Squadron had also joined the search. *Leila B. Salaverria with a report from AP*

Beltran faces one more month in detention

By Tarra V. Quismundo

ANAKPAWIS REP. CRISPIN BELTRAN WILL remain in detention for another month, according to Dennis Maga, spokesperson of the Free Ka Bel Movement.

A Makati court had asked the Supreme Court for a 30-day extension to resolve Beltran's petition for his release and judicial determination of probable cause.

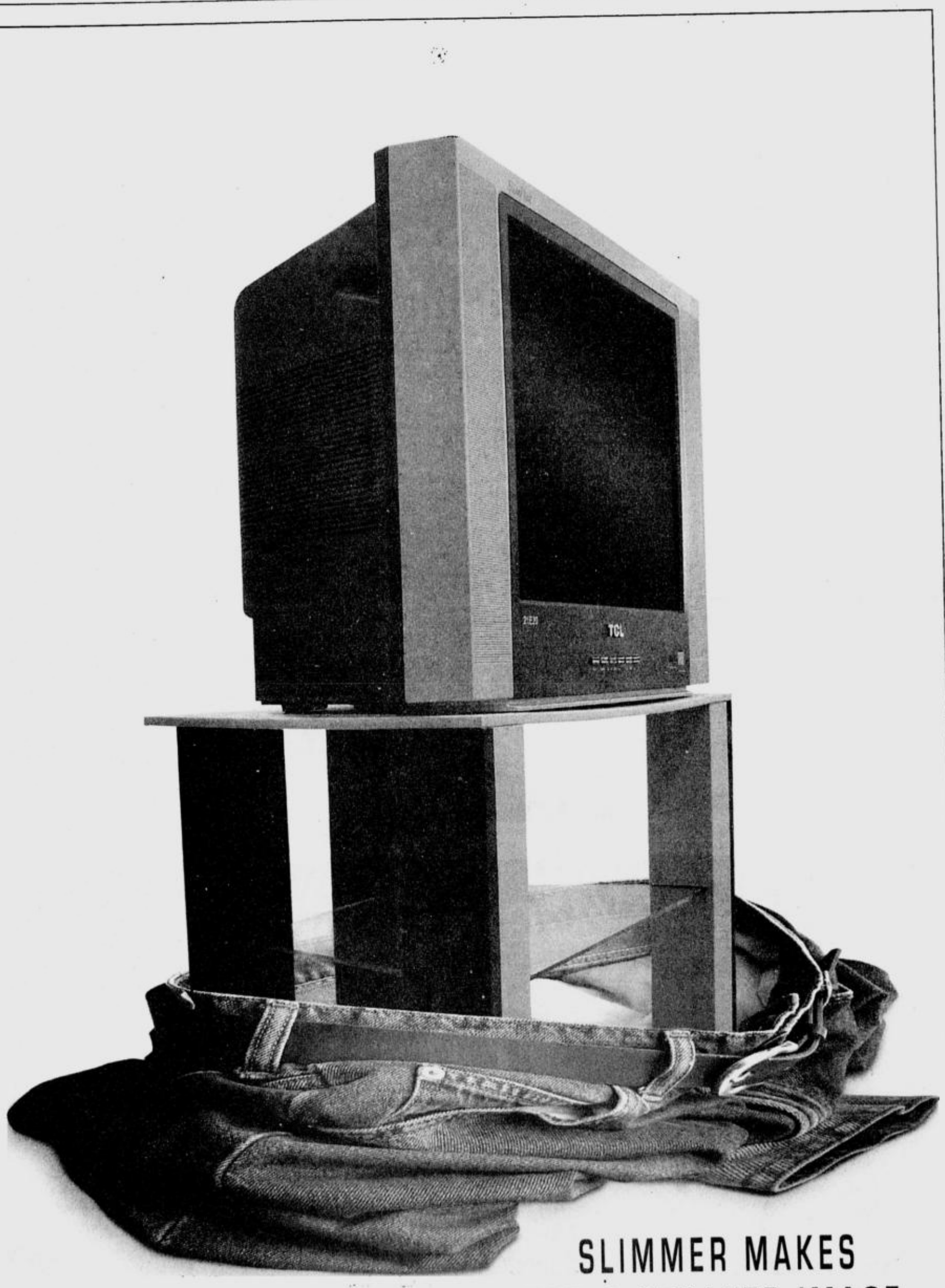
Originally, Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 137 Judge Jenny Lind Delorino had until Sunday to decide on the petition.

Beltran had questioned rebellion charges filed against him and recaptured Magdalo soldier, 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan, for their alleged collusion with communist rebels to violently oust President Macapagal-Arroyo. But last week, Delorino asked the High Tribunal for an extension.

"Today, we were expecting the resolution on whether [Beltran] would be released. Unfortunately, Judge Delorino asked an extension....That means [Beltran] would wait another month in detention. Our message to Judge Delorino is not to be pressured by the DOJ (Department of Justice). Hold on to justice because it is clear, as evidence would show, that he is innocent," Maga said.

For more than a month now, Beltran, 73, has been detained at the Philippine National Police (PNP) Hospital for non-bailable rebellion charges the DOJ filed against him on March 2.

On March 13, a Quezon City court hearing separate sedition charges against Beltran had ordered his release, citing his immunity from suit as a member of Congress. Police, however, refused to yield to the order because of his non-bailable charges pending at the Makati RTC.



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Isidore

1st Reading: Num 21:4-9
Gospel: John 8:21-30

Jesus said to the Pharisess, "I am going away, and though you look for me, you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come." The Jews wondered, "Why does he say that we can't come where he is going? Will he kill himself?"

But Jesus said, "You are from below and I am from above; you are of this world and I am not of this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. And you shall die in your sins unless you believe that I am He."

They asked him, "Who are you?"; and Jesus said, "Just what I have told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the One who sent me is truthful and everything I learned from him, I proclaim to the world."

They didn't understand that Jesus was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of myself, but I say just what the Father taught me. He who sent me is with me and has not left me alone; because I always do what pleases him."

As Jesus spoke like this, many believed in him.

Commentary

The people rebel against Moses when they have left Egypt and they are stricken with serpents. The cure is to look upon the seraph serpent wrapped around the pole of Moses and so look upon the evil they have done. Seeing brings healing.

Jesus declares that he is leaving and they will not see him and so will be left in their sins/evil. Seeing Jesus and seeing that he is "I AM," and that the truthful one has sent him into the world, saves us, heals and makes us whole again as human beings. But we must look and see the evil—violence and injustice that we have done in the world against others, crucified and broken (the Body of Christ)—and come to know God crucified and risen from the dead.

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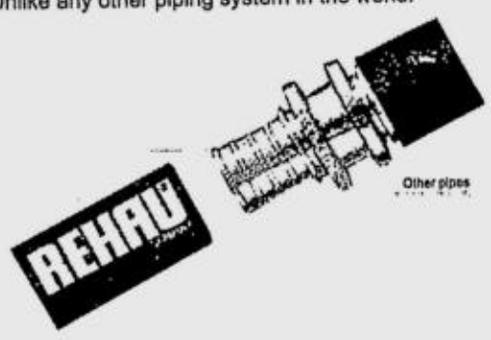

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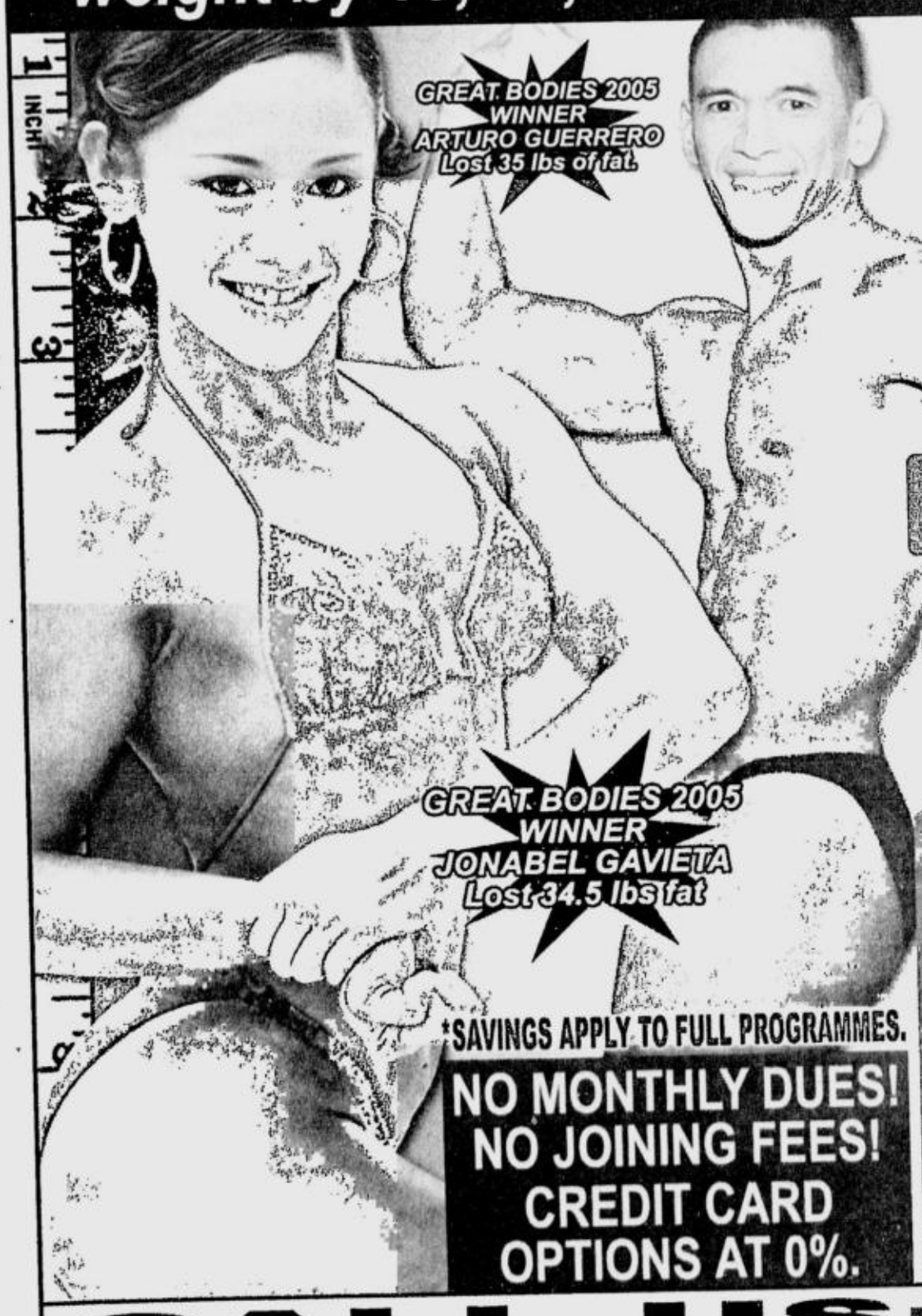

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Poll fraud researcher campaigned for GMA in 1998

ESTRELLA

By Philip C. Tubeza

HERMENEGILDO ESTRELLA JR., WHO TOLD a Senate hearing yesterday that President Macapagal-Arroyo had cheated in the 2004 balloting, actually worked for her election as vice president in 1998.

A management consultant, Estrella said he campaigned for Ms Arroyo as part of Speaker Jose de Venecia's 1998 failed presidential bid. He said he was a special assistant to the Lakas-NUCD campaign manager.

Estrella said he did not see anything wrong in talking about poll fraud now.

"There's a difference between telling the truth and party affiliation," he told the INQUIRER.

Estrella, 66, said he was now working independently and was not paid for his research on election fraud and for his testimony before the Senate yesterday

He did reveal that he had worked for Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. as a consultant during the national canvassing of votes for the 2004 presidential race.

Estrella said Pimentel first invited him as a consultant in 2003 to review the Commission on Elections plan to computerize the 2004 elections.

"We knew each other. He knows I can design systems so he asked me what to watch out for in the (Comelec computerization) process," Estella said.

But after the Supreme Court stopped the Comelec modernization program, Pimentel asked him to work for him during the 2004 canvassing in the House of Representatives, helping review the election results.

"First, I had to compare the Statement of Votes with the Certificates of Canvass because sometimes you would immediately see the indicators if the addition was incorrect," Estrella said.

He said it was then that he started to realize the extent of the irregularities.

"I found it my duty to tell people about it," Estrella said, adding that he was no longer connected with any political party, even civil society groups.

Estrella said he was also familiar with the election process since he worked as project manager for the Comelec's quick-count during the 1986 snap elections. "That was a P40 million project. So more or less I have an idea of how the whole process goes," he said.

Before working for the Comelec, Estrella was a management consultant for big firms like IBM, Citibank and Ayala Investment.

He also worked for the Government Service Insurance System, the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Office of Strategic Affairs, and the Bases Conversion Task Force.

Borra says cheating marred '04 elections

From page A1

Hermenegildo Estrella, a management consultant, presented to the committee an opposition-commissioned study purporting to show that as a result of the series of calls between Ms Arroyo and former Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, more than 300,000 votes cast for the late movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. were counted for Ms Arroyo.

The calls were tapped. The release of the bugged phone conversations sparked calls for Ms Arroyo's resignation. She was subsequently impeached, but her majority allies in the House of Representatives killed the process on a technicality in September last year.

The Palace says the wiretapping was part of an elaborate plot to oust the 58-year-old President.

Roberto Verzola, an information technology expert who is executive director of the advocacy group Philippine Greens Institute, also presented his study at the hearing which showed a discrepancy in the tallies of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) and Congress.

Case closed

Romulo Macalintal, Ms Arroyo's election lawyer, told reporters that he had advised the President not to comment on yesterday's allegations in the nationally televised Senate hearing.

"There being no more real party in interest or anybody to question the results, I have already advised the President not to comment anymore on this case," Macalintal said.

"This case is already closed and terminated. She will not comment anymore, now and forever, unless directed by a competent authority, but surely not by any self-serving, self-proclaimed expert," Macalintal said.

Referring to Borra's testimony, Macalintal said the "Comelec is an independent body. If there is evidence to show ... irregularities it is up to them to undertake measures."

In his lengthy testimony, Estrella linked the President's calls to Garcillano to the over 600,000 votes she garnered in six Mindanao provinces.

Quoting from his study, "The 2004 Election: The Truth Behind the Hello Garci Episode," he testified that Ms Arroyo called Garcillano at least 15 times between May 26, 2004 and June 10, 2004 to inquire about her votes, among other things.

Vote shaving, padding

After the calls, votes cast for Poe in Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao were shaved while Ms Arroyo's votes were padded, said Estrella, who made a PowerPoint presentation.

"The *dagdag* (padded) votes of GMA we computed to be 365,000," he said at the resumption of the Senate inquiry into the "Hello Garci" tape scandal, chaired by Biazon.

Estrella said he was commissioned by opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. in 2004 to conduct a study on the Comelec's computerization system as well as on documents presented during the canvassing.

In the final tally by Congress, Ms Arroyo won over Poe by a 1.1-million margin.

Borra said that the cheating was borne out by "actual and empirical evidence."

"I did not conclude massive cheating, but there was cheating,'" he said to a question by opposition Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

Cheating is a crime

Borra stressed that the agency was not the only institution that "will run after the cheaters."

He pointed out that fresh evidence could be presented to either the Presidential Electoral Tribunal or the Senate Electoral Tribunal for any protest in connection with the presidential and senatorial elections in 2004.

Estrella told the Senate committee on national defense that he had an additional presentation which would show vote-padding in Pampanga, Iloilo and Cebu in favor of Ms Arroyo.

The padding, if subtracted from Ms Arroyo's votes, would drastically reduce her 1.1-million margin over Poe to a mere 171,000 votes, he said. If the "padded votes of 365,000" counted in favor of Ms Arroyo in the six Mindanao provinces were further deducted from this, her lead would be wiped out, Estrella added.

"And when we put in the *bawas* (shaved) votes and return these to FPJ ... FPJ starts to lead," he said.

Biazon pointed out that the goal of the hearings was to determine whether there was massive cheating, not "who won or lost."

"Winning or losing the election is not a crime, but cheating is a crime," he said.

Discrepancy

With the aid of a PowerPoint, Estrella presented audio tapes of the series of calls made by Ms Arroyo to Garcillano, including one on May 29, 2004 in which she hinted she wanted to lead by 1 million votes overall.

Estrella also noted that some election returns used in the May 2004 vote bore serial numbers different from the ones assigned to them by the Comelec.

These returns should not be canvassed unless the Comelec orders it, he added, citing the Omnibus Election Code.

Borra explained, however, that the discrepancy could have been the result of a printing error, given the short time the Comelec had to implement manual elections after the Supreme Court voided its automated election deal.

Namfrel count

In his PowerPoint presentation, Verzola said the greatest discrepancy between the Namfrel and the congressional tallies appeared in Basilan.

Namfrel counted 361 precincts in Basilan, while Congress counted 600 precincts, or an increase of some 1.7 percent, Verzola said, using slides. This meant that the difference in votes of the five presidential candidates should also have increased by around 1.7 percent, he said.

"If you look at actual numbers, you see GMA [votes] increasing by around 6.6 percent, instead of 1.7 percent, and FPJ [votes] increasing by 1.1 percent, instead of 1.7 percent," Verzola pointed out.

In terms of lead, under the Namfrel tally, Poe led by 63.1 percent of the total votes, but in the Congress tally, Ms Arroyo won by 22 percent of the total vote, he added.

"This is the highest discrepancy that I examined," he said.

Verzola further pointed out that votes of all five candidates totaled 136,297, exceeding the number of 117,467 registered voters in Basilan.

Vote Discrepancies

LANAO DEL SUR	Election Returns	Prov'l COCs
Poe	183,724	42,803
Arroyo	42,803	128,301
Votes affected by vote-shaving and padding:	226,120	

BASILAN	ER	PCOC
Poe	73,274	48,685
Arroyo	10,198	79,702
Votes affected by vote-shaving and padding:	94,089	

SULU	ER	Mun'l COCs	PCOC
Poe	96,622	60,807	60,807
Arroyo	60,357	78,429	78,429
Votes affected by vote-shaving and padding:	53,893		

TAWI-TAWI	ER	PCOC
Poe	60,436	49,803
Arroyo	16,631	33,634
Votes affected by vote-shaving and padding:	27,236	

SULTAN KUDARAT	ER	MCOC	PCOC
Poe	124,700	110,140	40,714
Arroyo	58,837	69,980	126,822
Votes affected by vote-shaving and padding:	151,971		

MAGUINDANAO	ER	PCOC
Poe	1,416	58,476
Arroyo	109,151	84,787
Votes affected by vote shaving and padding:	107,135	

In sum, 660,324 votes were affected by vote-shaving and padding, according to Estrella. He based his figures on the copies of ERs and COCs provided by the Comelec to the opposition Kilusan ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, the dominant minority party.

In the Know

From page A1

- The Comelec en banc will decide whether to entertain or to dismiss the petition.

However, in the Supreme Court ruling of March 1997 on the case of Santiago v Comelec, the poll body was enjoined not to entertain the petition of the People's Initiative for Reforms, Modernization and Action (Pirma), a signature campaign to amend the Constitution during the Ramos administration.

The amendment would have enabled an incumbent President to run for reelection.

The Supreme Court ruled that Republic Act No. 6735 (the Initiative and Referendum Act) was "inadequate to cover the system of initiative on amendments to the Constitution and to have failed to provide sufficient standard for subordinate legislation."

Although the Supreme Court ruled that the people's initiative still needed an enabling law, the verification process by the Comelec was still sanctioned by RA 6735, said Milagros Desamito, director of the Comelec's Education and Information Department.

Section 7 of the law states: "The Election Registrar shall verify the signatures on the basis of the registry list of voters, voters' affidavits and voters' identification cards used in the immediately preceding election."

The March 1997 Supreme Court ruling allowed the Comelec to conduct four activities—preparation of forms for the people's initiative, provision of necessary statistics, establishment of signing stations, and verification of the signatures of voters who signed the petition. *Kate Pedroso, PDI Research*

Stars to 'fall like rain' ...

From page A1

The auspicious hour is at midnight on April 21.

But to better appreciate the heavens, stargazers are advised to go somewhere dark, preferably some place without street lights—but safe.

Then look up.

A keen eye could see up to 20 "falling stars" per hour, courtesy of the annual Lyrids meteor shower that has not failed to provide a spectacle every year for the past 2,600 years.

"Chinese records say 'stars fell like rain' in the shower of 687 B.C. In recent times, however, the Lyrids have generally been weak," the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said in its astronomical bulletin.

Up to 10 meteors can be seen every night this month, but the peak of the meteor shower, which lasts less than 24 hours, will be at midnight on April 21 to early morning of April 22.

"The observation of the meteors is most favorable after midnight when the constellation Lyra, the showers' radiant, is already more than 30 degrees above the northeastern horizon," Pagasa said.

Meteors are rock particles that burn due to friction and are pulled by the earth's gravitation, causing them to appear like stars falling from the sky.

Meteor showers occur every month except for three months of the year, said Bernardo M. Soriano Jr., chief of Pagasa's Atmospheric, Geophysical and Space Sciences branch.

The brightest and most spectacular shower is the Leonid meteor shower in November. This spectacle can hurl up to 100 meteors every hour.

"Now is the best time to watch the shower because generally the sky is clear. Even if there is La Niña, the absolute value of the rainfall is still smaller than the volume during the rainy season," he said.

Soriano said the best areas to watch a shower are dark places without street lights. Artificial lighting causes light pollution, which diminishes the visibility of the sky, he said.

Those who are in well-lit places can use black cloth to cover their peripheral vision and make holes through which they could watch the sky, he added.

But is it in the stars, Brutus?
Or in ourselves?

Comelec fund lack may derail Cha-cha

From page A1

voters—for the shift to a parliamentary form of government.

In a people's initiative, a petition for amendment requires the signatures of at least 12 percent of the total number of registered voters and at least 3 percent of every congressional district's registered voters.

Contingency fund

Funding a plebiscite would not be a problem, Malacañang said yesterday.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said Malacañang could make use of the contingency fund and savings in the reenacted budget to finance the plebiscite.

"We already have congressional approval when the 2005 budget was passed," Andaya said in a phone interview.

He said the contingency fund, which now amounts to P800 million, had been similarly used in the past.

"The contingent fund can be increased if it is not enough," he said.

The contingency fund was used to finance the 2004 elections when the government was operating under a reenacted budget, according to Andaya.

He said this exercise saw "half of the [current] Senate" being elected.

The government spent P4.8 billion for the 2004 polls, with P800 million coming from the contingency fund. The rest of the money came from savings in the national budget, according to Andaya.

He said the Constitution allowed the augmentation of funds if, in this case, the contingency fund was not sufficient.

Congressional approval

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the President could not use P2 billion of her contingency fund for a plebiscite on proposed amendments to the 1987 Constitution without the approval of Congress.

Pimentel challenged Malacañang to justify its plan to set aside more than P2 billion or release other funds for the plebiscite considering that this was not included in the proposed 2006 national budget.

"Where will they get the money? No public funds can be spent for any purpose without the approval of Congress, which has the power of the purse. It should follow the process prescribed by the Constitution," he said in a statement.

Pimentel reminded the Palace that the contingency fund was intended for activities that were "emergency in nature, or those that had not been anticipated."

He pointed out that Charter change did not fall under the category of unanticipated activities "since it has been on the drawing board of the administration for a long time now."

Lack of enabling law

Borra said the absence of an enabling law could also derail the Cha-cha train.

He said the Comelec should dismiss the petition to amend the 1987 Constitution through a people's initiative because the Initiative and Referendum Law (Republic Act No. 6735) was "inadequate."

Borra said he would vote to dismiss any petitions from the organizers of the current people's initiative because the Supreme Court had ruled in 1997 that RA 6735 was "inadequate, incomplete or wanting as a guide for the conduct of a (people's) initiative for the amendment of the Constitution."

He said there was no law to implement the initiative.

"What shall we do? Most likely, I don't want to speak for and in behalf of the en banc (Comelec), but in so far as I'm concerned, I will dismiss the petition," Borra said at a press conference in the Senate.

Even if those behind the people's initiative met the required three percent of the number of voters for every legislative district and 12 percent for the whole country, the Comelec would "have to dismiss" the petition, he said.

"Because there is no law according to the Supreme Court. What will be the basis of our decision? So, we have to dismiss and let the party go to the Supreme Court," he said.

He said the "adverse party" could go to the Supreme Court and determine whether RA 6735 was inadequate and resolve the issue once and for all.

"We hope it will be (done) at the earliest possible time because we are preparing for 2007 elections and preparation is very important," he said.

Borra downplayed accusations that the Comelec en banc could be held liable for defying the Supreme Court when it ordered the verification of the signatures gathered for the people's initiative.

"We're not going ahead. We're stopping at the proper time and at the proper situation," he said.

"At what point? When the petition will be filed formally with the Comelec. I don't want to speak in behalf of the en banc [but] in so far as I am concerned, I will dismiss the petition because we have no legal basis," he said.

No utility

While admitting that he considered the verification of signatures as having "no utility," Borra said the Comelec had to do it because the Supreme Court allowed the poll body to verify the signatures.

He blamed the court for issuing an "effeminate" ruling on the law—declaring it inadequate while allowing the Comelec to verify the collected signatures, among other things.

Borra said the Comelec commissioners met late last week and decided to issue "circulars" to field officers for them to verify the signatures that had been gathered, even if their number had yet to reach three percent of the registered voters in a congressional district.

He said the circulars had been issued and local election officers were verifying the signatures.

Manual verification

The Comelec may face delays in the verification of signatures because of improperly filled forms.

Director Milagros Desamito of the Comelec's Education and Information Division (EID) said election registrars in congressional districts had to manually verify each signature on the petitions because the voters' lists had not been fully computerized.

Desamito disclosed that several problems had been brought to the EID's attention, as registrars in some areas began verifying the signatures that were gathered two weeks ago at the barangay level.

Chief among the problems, Desamito recounted, was that many signatories did not list their precinct numbers, addresses or, on some forms, their birthdays.

"It would have been easier [for our registrars] if these were done," she said, adding that because of this, registrars in districts with noncomputerized voters' lists would have to sort through the books of registered voters of each precinct one by one to check each signature.

"It will not derail but it may slow down the process," she told reporters.

There have been also queries from registrars in the provinces who feared that they may be cited in contempt by the Supreme Court for going ahead with the verification.

"We explained to them that the Supreme Court 1997 ruling allows verification because it is one of the four initiatory steps for initiatives," she said.

Fake signatures

Desamito said the forms would also have to be thoroughly scrutinized to see if there were fake signatures or if there were signatures of unregistered voters, as local officials in the provinces claimed.

She said the authenticity of each signature would be based on its "seeming resemblance" to the one in the Comelec's book of voters.

The EID chief said Cha-cha proponents had also requested the poll body to speed up the verification.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. announced last week that the verification could be finished in 15 days to one month.

Treasure hunters pester PCGG on fabled Marcos gold

By Alcuin Papa

TREASURE HUNTERS CONTINUE to pound on the door of the Presidential Commission on Good Government for permission to dig for the fabled Marcos gold.

But PCGG Commissioner Ricardo Abcede said the treasure hunters were knocking on the wrong door since it was the Office of the President that approved any diggings.

The so-called Marcos gold was supposedly part of the Yamashita treasure buried in the country at the end of World War II by the Japanese general for whom it was named.

Decades ago, part of the Yamashita treasure was supposedly found by a Baguio City man from it was allegedly taken by soldiers loyal to Marcos.

Abcede said he marveled at the "fantabulous" stories of the treasure hunters, including their claims that they knew where the Marcos gold and the Yamashita treasure were hidden.

"Every now and then, we get letters, we get calls that there is this or that treasure. Some of them are hoaxes. We wouldn't want to be wasting our time looking into all of that. So if one is fake, a hoax, we ignore it," he said.

He said the PCGG was extra careful about handling claims of hidden treasure since these claims could be used to defraud others.

"There are some out there who are using these claims as scams. They claim they have a map and they solicit investments from individuals and entities based on these claims. Later, they disappear with the money. We're also concerned about that," Abcede said.

On the other hand, he said, there were "serious informants" willing to "supply information" about ill-gotten Marcos wealth that the government and the public did not yet know about.

Some of the informants, however, demanded a reward for pointing out where the Marcos wealth was hidden, Abcede said.

Investigating the claims, Abcede said, has given the PCGG staff the experience to know if a particular claim was valid or not.

"They (staff) just take one look and they can immediately tell if the claims are bogus," he said.

The PCGG commissioner spoke up after a report surfaced last week of an alleged $800-million Marcos deposit in the Bank of England.

No CIDG agents at customs

THE POLICE HAVE revoked the identification cards issued to agents of an influential unit in Camp Crame following reports that these are being used to extort money from firms at the Bureau of Customs and Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Police said private companies should not entertain individuals or groups carrying cards issued to confidential agents of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

CIDG director Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza said he has not signed nor renewed such ID cards.

The CIDG, the police's investigative arm, has been tasked to go after smugglers and recently arrested a "big fish" in Samuel Lee, whom it charged last month with violating the country's laws on tariff and customs.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY TO BID

INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY (ISWMS-MRF) FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALIWAG PROVINCE OF BULACAN (DESIGN AND BUILD SCHEME)

The Municipality of Baliwag, by virtue of the duly approved Sanggunian Resolution have authorized the Honorable Mayor Romeo M. Estrella to secure funding through Bond Flotation an amount for the payments under the contract: INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY (ISWMS-MRF) – DESIGN AND BUILD SCHEME – *in the amount of Php50.0 Million including the acquisition cost of the project site.*

ISMS-MRF Design Requirement:

The LGU will require the design/equipment importation/fabrication/installation and general plant building construction including road works and security fence of modular and Integrated Solid Waste Management System-Materials Recovery Facility (ISWMS-MRF). The proposed ISWMS-MRF shall demonstrate the capacity to treat, process and ultimately dispose – in an environment-friendly manner – the segregated or mixed domestic solid waste and special wastes from different sources within and outside of the municipality of Baliwag. The preferred technology must possess the ability to reclaim/convert 90% of incoming wastes into beneficial by-products such as biogas fuel, organic fertilizer, recyclable treated water, clean recyclable plastics and other materials, and to convert residual clean inerts into concrete blocks and construction filing materials. The objective is to prevent the necessity to operate and maintain solid waste landfill, therefore, prevent lecheate generation and leachate treatment and finally prevent odor and gas emissions. The preferred technology must possess prior technology verification from the DOST/ITDI, certifications from accredited/designated technical groups/verifiers, invention patents/utility models from IPO or similar technology verification groups.

The proposed technology must be compliant to the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9003, or, R.A. 6969, The Toxic Substances, Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Act, R.A. 8749, The Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, The Clean Water Act, PD 1152: The Philippine Environmental Code, the Kyoto Protocol and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

Further, the operating objective of the ISWMS-MRF that the Municipality of Baliwag requires, must show viability and profits of operation and the operator, therefore, the facility shall possess the flexibility to treat and process the estimated 40.0 metric tons of municipal solid waste that it generates per day in more or less 8 hours/day operation and to continue operating for another six to eight (6-8) hours in order to process off-town solid waste sources.

Further, the prospective bidder/Applicant shall submit a comprehensive Design/Plans and Specs of the required Integrated Solid Waste Management System-Materials Recovery Facility/technology that must demonstrate that its operation and treatment of waste do not create nuisance or negative impacts to the environment and to the community, such as leachate, odor, gas emissions, vermin and infestation. Together with this Design/Plans, the applicant shall submit an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that is needed for the approval of the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) of the proposed project.

1. The Municipality of Baliwag now invites potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM-MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY (DESIGN AND BUILD SCHEME). Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The deadline for the submission of eligibility documents shall be on or before April 15, 2006. Only those bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents.
2. Interested Bidders shall secure the Eligibility Documents, upon their submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI Form available at the address given below) from the BAC Secretariat at the address stated below, on or before April 11, 2006. They shall submit the accomplished Eligibility documents in order for these to be received by the BAC Secretariat in the same address, on or before April 15, 2006.
3. The Local Government of Baliwag reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without hereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.
4. Waiver: The prospective bidder agrees and binds itself to abide to the final decision of the honorable members of the BAC and further waives any legal action or claims against the LGU of Baliwag pertaining to the project now and the future.

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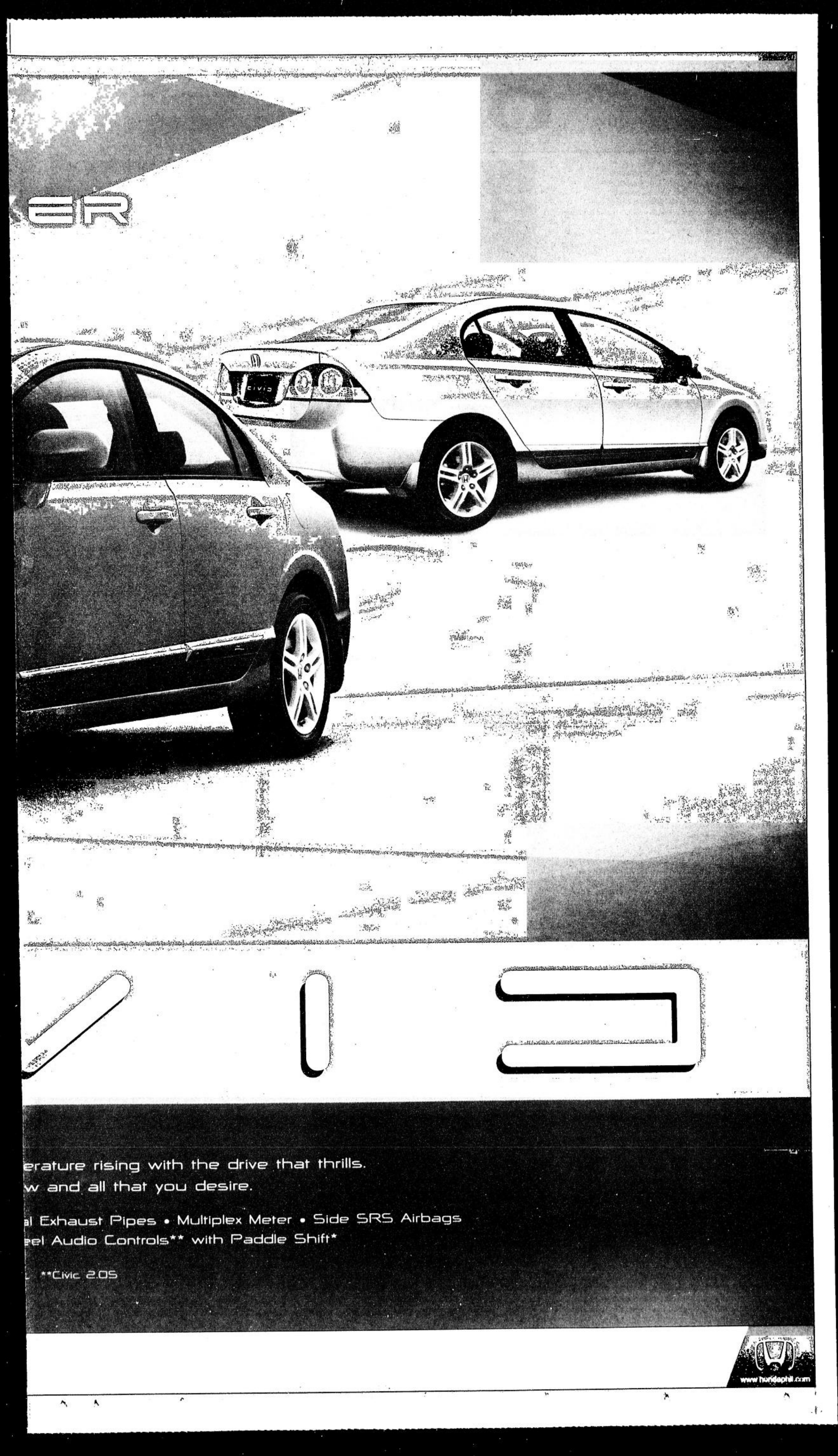
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OPINION

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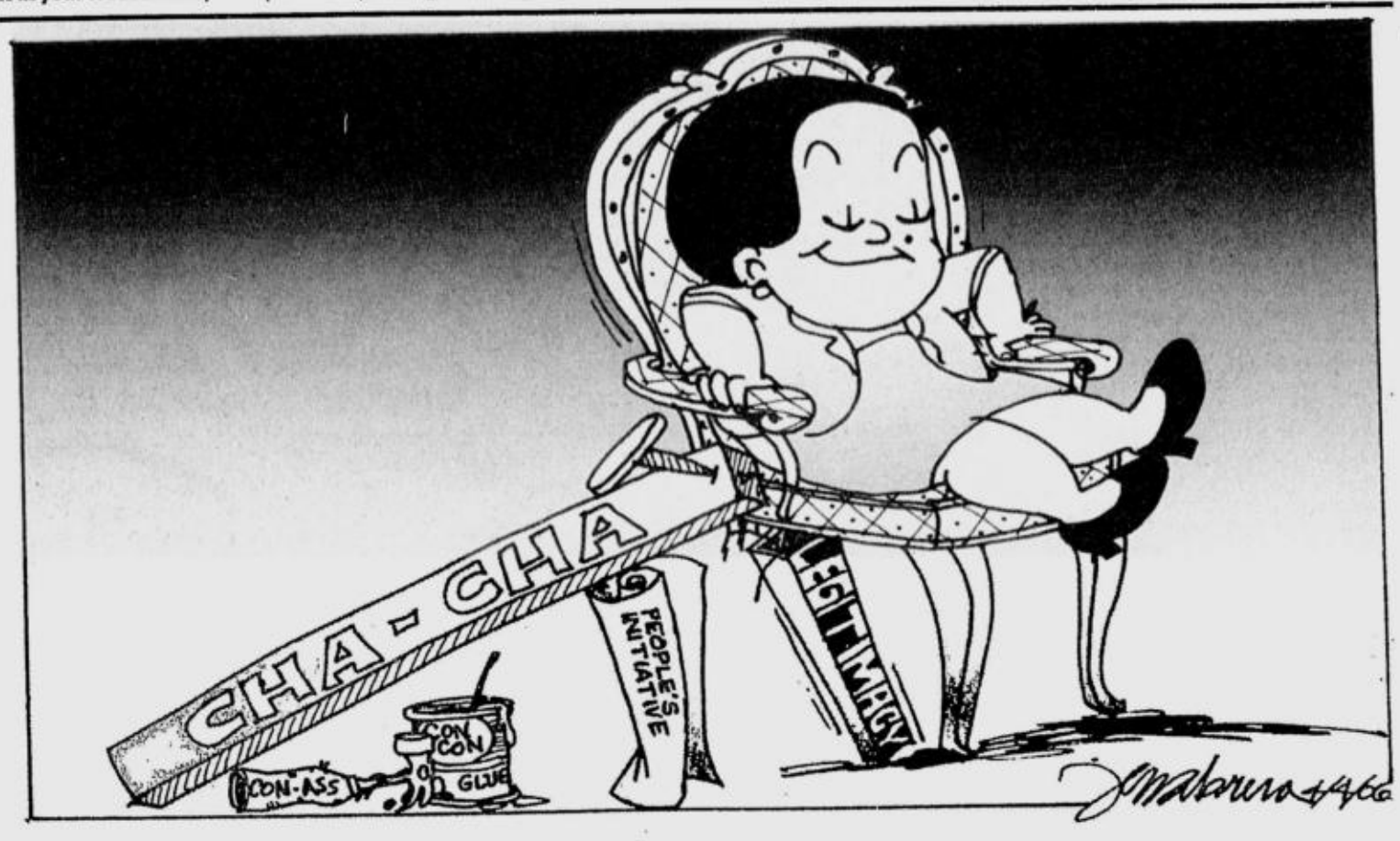

Entrepreneurship

EDITORIAL

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN WHEN THOUsands of students graduate from colleges and universities and face the big, wide world outside. Sadly, these bright-eyed new graduates face a not very encouraging future, given the state our economy is in. A great majority of them will be unemployed for a long time and will remain a burden to their families and to the state, unless they can do something now to keep themselves busy and productive.

Neither the government nor the private sector can offer the estimated 436,000 new graduates many jobs. Of the workforce totaling 35.2 million, 2.8 million are unemployed and 6.9 million are underemployed. Most of the graduates will join the ranks of the unemployed. Government offices are fully staffed, and the only positions that will be open are those that will be vacated by death, terminal sickness or dismissal. The private sector is not offering many employment opportunities, either, and those open require people who have special skills and some experience. Most of the jobs open to the new graduates will go to the highly talented and the highly skilled.

One option for the new graduates is to seek employment abroad. Right now there are many openings for nurses in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Some graduates of medical schools will have to take a nursing course to be eligible for these nurses' positions abroad. Many education graduates will seek employment as governesses or domestic helpers abroad, a sad waste of training and education as well as manpower that is sorely needed in our schools.

Graduates who have certain technical and vocational skills enjoy an advantage over those who have completed white-collar courses such as law, commerce or mass communication. These technical and vocational school graduates can easily be employed in the Middle East and other parts of the world where there is a big demand for skilled labor.

What then are the rest of the new college graduates to do? One option is to become entrepreneurs and start small businesses. But this will require some capital and some entrepreneurial and technical expertise. These graduates can enrol in some courses such as those that used to be offered by the Livelihood Resource Center and learn entrepreneurial skills. Then they can use their savings, or borrow money from relatives, friends or banks and set up small enterprises. Or groups of graduates can pool their savings to form partnerships.

Running small enterprises may not seem so glamorous as going to 9-to-5 jobs dressed in long-sleeved shirts and neckties or barong Tagalog, but they offer a lot of possibilities for long-term advancement. But it will take a lot of hard work, perseverance and determination for these small businesses to grow. The rewards, however, may be surprising for some.

Spoofs Ltd. Inc. is a good example of an enterprise that started small, expanded over the years, and is now branching out to Alabang, Pampanga and Baguio. It was set up by Carlo Anthony Dobles and his friends at the Ateneo de Manila University with a borrowed capital of P18,000. First, they spoofed the Polo shirt with a Bolo design featuring a bolo-wielding farmer riding on a carabao. This was followed by United Couples of Banatan (United Colors of Benetton).

A similar enterprise is Islands Souvenirs which was founded by Jay Aldeguer in 1999. It began showcasing the best of the Philippine islands and has moved on to producing souvenirs from various tourist destinations.

And would you believe that the multimillion-peso National Bookstore chain started as a stall on Escolta in 1942 on a total capital of only P211 scraped up by Jose and Socorro Ramos? The story of Socorro Ramos is so inspiring that she has been called a "National Treasure." Last year she won the prestigious Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Award.

Another enterprise that started as a small backyard business is Splash Corp. which was set up with a start-up capital of only P12,000 by Dr. Rolando Hortaleza and his wife Rosalinda. Today it is a multimillion-peso business selling mega brands such as Extraderm, Skin White and Biolink.

All these examples show that small business may be the way to go for new graduates. It's time graduates stopped thinking only of regular office jobs as the only possible way of making a living. They should start thinking of going into business for themselves. That way they will get themselves immediately employed and occupied, feeding their families and helping in the economic development of the country.

Memorare

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

LIQUID SUNLIGHT FROM AN AUTUMN DAY flooded the Vatican piazza. Should I troop into a papal audience with Food and Agriculture Organization conference delegates? I mumbled. Or should I play hooky? Soaking the sun on Via della Conciliazone beckoned.

But "a set of scruples badly worn" prevailed. With delegates from 160 countries, I gasped as Pope John Paul II fell when microphone wires snagged his legs. Waving aside a Vatican paramedic, he continued his talk. Rome newspapers reported, the next day, he'd fractured an arm.

"He was bent but never broken," his former secretary, now Stanislaw Cardinal Dziwiz, said on Sunday's CNN's two-hour memorial documentary, "The Last Days of Pope John Paul II." It marked the first anniversary of the death of a pontiff who "never wasted time on self pity. 'You don't come down from the cross,' he'd say."

Five million came for his funeral a year ago. Since then, some 10,000 people pray daily before his simple grave in the crypts below St. Peter's main altar. "In death, (he) acquired a new title for the modern age: the People's Pope," British Broadcasting Corp.'s Peter Gould commented.

At his funeral the pilgrims chanted: *"Santo subito!" Make him a saint now! "Santo subito!"* repeated the thousands who came Sunday to remember the man who had touched their lives.

That petition backs Pope Benedict's decision to waive the rule that stipulates a five-year waiting period before beatification process can start. There is precedent. In 2003, John Paul II set that rule aside, for the first time ever, to fast-track Mother Teresa of Calcutta's beatification.

Beatification requires proof of one miracle that can be attributed to the late pope. A second is needed before canonization. The process can stretch over centuries. It took 345 years before the Filipino protomartyr, Pedro Calungsod of the Visayas, was beatified.

So, what are saints? These are men and women, the Filipino theologian Catalino Arevalo writes, "we can hold up to question the authenticity and firmness of our faith, which though badly misunderstood among so many of our people, still form ... the framework of meaning within which the days of our lives are lived."

John Paul II canonized 482 saints and beatified over 1,400 others, more than all his predecessor ever did. He frequently performed these rites during his overseas visits. At the Luneta, he beatified 18 martyrs, including a young Chinoy from Binondo who was later canonized as St. Lorenzo Ruiz.

A Saint John Paul would be relevant for a secularized Europe. "The Vatican is 400 acres of faith in a sea of unbelief," Washington Post's George Will wrote.

Even those who disagreed with John Paul II accept that he was a remarkable man, who had an extraordinary impact even on the wider world. The wellspring of that impact is noted, almost as an aside, in a 20-page spread in the Atlantic magazine's cover story, "The Year of Two Popes: How 'Mr Inside' Stepped Into the Shoes of 'Mr Outside.'"

"When he was elected in 1978 ... John Paul, 58, was the youngest pope in modern history," writes Paul Elie. "When he died at 84, he seemed beyond age, like a biblical patriarch.

"In the obituaries, early photographs showing his strong jaw and straight back came as a shock. It was hard to remember that he had ever walked normally, much less skied or stood up to the Soviets. Parkinson's disease, an assassin's bullet, a hip replacement, fatigue and old age, had ravaged him more profoundly than the public knew....

"(Yet) the longer he lived, the greater reverence for him grew at the Vatican. The more he suffered, the more Christlike he was seen to be... The less capable he became of doing the routine work of the papacy, the more confident his subordinates were that he was a saint in their midst... Benedict will govern more but matter less than John Paul to the lives of individual Catholics."

Indeed, this radiant man towered. This was the pope from Eastern Europe who helped topple communism. He reached out to people of all faiths everywhere, specially the youth while staunchly defending values his Church held, from divorce to abortion. "He tried to be the conscience of the world, calling for peace in the face of violence, and taking a stand against the war in Iraq," BBC adds.

This most Marian of Popes resonated among Filipinos who cherish the Blessed Lady. In Davao, he reached out to Muslims saying, "Are you not brothers of Christians in this great country through bonds of nationality, history, geography and hope for a better future you are building together?"

"Government cannot claim to serve the common good when human rights are not safeguarded," John Paul told the dictator Ferdinand Marcos to his face.

"Land is a gift of God for the benefit of all," he said in Negros where poverty trapped migrant workers (*sacadas*) in stark contrast to the opulent life styles of hacienderos. "It is not admissible that the benefits it produces serve only a limited number of people while the vast majority are excluded..."

"Death is not the extinguishing of life," the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore wrote. "It is putting out the lamp because dawn has come."

In his final illness, John Paul taught us how to put out the lamp when the final letting go is asked, as it will be for all of us.

I had a dream

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

LAST SATURDAY, I HAD A DREAM.

I dreamed that GMA was struck by a ray of divine light like Paul of Tarsus or had a visitation from one of the archangels, who need lessons in anger management, demanding to know what she meant by their boss putting her on earth for a purpose, and she experienced a change of heart. Dreams tend to be a little fuzzy, so I don't know whether GMA's change of heart came from divine inspiration or divine wrath, from the promise of eternal bliss or the threat of eternal fire.

There and then, she vowed to drop Charter change. She realized, with beatific encouragement, that changing the Constitution was as much a solution to the problem of a government widely regarded as having no mandate as forcing Jose Pidal to undertake liposuction was to changing his image in the eyes of the public. She realized, with infernal discouragement, that having Jose de Venecia, Ronaldo Puno and Lito Atienza advertise the virtues of Cha-cha made it about as believable as she herself teaching public elementary school pupils to tell the truth at all times.

Indeed, she vowed to announce this week that she was resigning from her post in Malacañang and was forswearing public office altogether. She planned to apologize again to the public, this time with the eyes to show even Susan Roces she meant every word she said. She wanted to apologize for even saying that she was resigning from the presidency, for to resign from something is to imply that one had earned that something to begin with, and she had never earned the presidency. She wanted to apologize more contritely about calling up Garci (she would name him this time), a thing she would acknowledge to be as much a crime to democracy as plagiarism was to writing, and fling herself before the public for clemency.

She vowed to call for elections so the country would have a new, and true, president. She would not call on Noli de Castro to take over the presidency not just because she had seen from her own example how disastrous that could be but because legally the vice president took over from the president only in cases where the presidency had been vacated by sickness or death. In this case, the presidency hadn't been vacated, it had never been occupied.

I dreamed that the *trapos* from the administration and the opposition, the congressmen who had killed the impeachment bid and the politicians opposing GMA for their own advancement, stunned by the change of heart of the one person who had outdone them in the black art of *trapo*-hood, decided not to be outdone this time in the white art of Robin Hood. Henceforth, they too would steal from the rich, namely themselves, to give to the poor, namely their constituents. Henceforth, they would think of the country first before themselves. With that openness of mind came enlightenment in the form of the sudden realization they were fools to have entertained supporting Cha-cha, or worse any move toward martial law or dictatorship, both of which were directly inimical to free elections and politicians.

Henceforth, they vowed to join the media, civil society, the Church, the businessmen and the public in saying, "Never again!" Never again to any political order that junked elections altogether, or that offered only plebiscites on issues that were of no concern to Filipinos, the votes anyway to be counted by Leonie Perez's and Virgilio Garcillano's disciples, and that proposed the indefinite rule of anyone in this country, least of all someone who had never won a presidential election in the first place.

I dreamed that Joe de V finally decided to make his peace with his Maker, whom he knew he was going to meet after at most a couple of decades, by retiring from public office and writing his memoirs as a cautionary tale for the youth, or as an example of a misspent life never to follow. I dreamed Fidel Ramos finally came to terms with the fact that he was out of power and would never be back in it, and had settled for spending the rest of his life curing insomniacs. (The funniest thing I heard about him was that the late great Nick Joaquin fell asleep in the middle of interviewing him for his biography, while taping his replies to questions.)

I dreamed civil society, the Church, business, the media and the public had come together as they did during the last two Edsas and vowed not just to end a reign of tyranny but to build a dream of a decent society. I dreamed that Bill Luz apologized for saying the 2004 elections were clean and Dinky Soliman vowed to persuade Code-NGO to return the Peace bonds. I dreamed the ex-activists who once fought the Marcos dictatorship and who are currently helping GMA mount one woke up crying, wondering where their souls went, and resolved anew to serve the people rather than Pidal.

I dreamed the people stopped believing that bread was better than freedom, the stomach was better than the spirit, the economy was better than morality, or indeed that the first could be had without the second. I dreamed the people stopped believing beggars could not be choosers and believed instead that choosers could never be beggars. I dreamed the people stopped believing need condemned them to a life of mediocrity and survival, and believed instead that self-respect drove them to reach once more for things that lay beyond their grasp.

I dreamed that the land began to fill with milk and honey after that. I dreamed that laughter wafted from the mouths of the children. I dreamed it was easy to raise the head again and be proud to call oneself Filipino.

I dreamed all this last Saturday, Saturday being April 1. Ah, but that the sanest things in the world should be thinkable only on the day devoted to God's favorite creatures, who are fools and dreamers!

Rare glimpses of RP culture

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

SENATE PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DRILON AND Senators Joker Arroyo and Aquilino Pimentel, all lawyers, said recently they would file a case against the Commission on Elections if it persists in verifying the signatures submitted for the people's initiative. They were reacting to reports that Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos had ordered his people to start the verification process.

It's strange that the senators would make a case against verification as this is among the four steps the Supreme Court, in its 1997 decision on Santiago vs. Comelec, clearly allowed the poll body to undertake prior to the filing of a petition. Is it possible that they have not read the Court's decision? On page 155 and 156 of the SC decision, the decision states: "The Comelec acquires jurisdiction over a petition for initiative only after its filing," which makes it the "initiatory pleading." Nothing before its filing is "cognizable" by the Comelec, sitting en banc. Its participation prior to filing includes, among other things: "to verify, through its election registrars, the signatures on the basis of the registry list of voters, voters' affidavits, and voters' identification cards used in the immediately preceding election." Thus, the verification of signatures being done by the Comelec is legal.

* * *

To this non-lawyer, the bigger puzzle is why the Court would put down in black and white its decision to allow the Comelec to verify the signatures for the initiative, only to prohibit it from taking jurisdiction of the petition if submitted, on the ground that there is no enabling law. Why would the Comelec encourage the gathering of signatures, opening its registration books and signature stations, only to throw out the petition in the end? Significantly, the two most senior magistrates now, Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban and Associate Justice Reynato Puno, opined in very strongly worded dissenting opinions that RA 7635, authored by Rep. Raul Roco, was sufficient for the initiative. I am confident that a majority of the current Court will see this contradiction and set it aright by approving the expected 10 million signatures as the sovereign will of the people.

* * *

By the way, my niece, Rochelle Olivares, daughter of my writer-brother Roger, was looking at the newspaper headlines soon after arriving from abroad and she read that Cha-cha was being proposed to cure the nation's ills. She mused that she had heard so much about the musical and dance-crazy Filipinos, but to dance away the country's problems? Aren't the Pinoys crazy!

On the other hand, my son Buddy, in his weekly program "Coast To Coast" over NBN-4, which seeks to link up the Philippines with other countries across the globe, interviewed Cuban Ambassador Luis Jimenez, who mentioned the great dances Cubanos are addicted to. No, said Jimenez, one of these dances was not Cha-cha, but Cha-cha-cha. Oh, that's right, said Buddy, Cha-cha here is a political issue!

* * *

At "Francophone Day" at French Ambassador Gerard Chesnel's residence recently, I ran into Jose Ma. Cariño, who's back at the Department of Foreign Affairs after a six-year posting as consul-general and one-time charge d'Affaires in our embassy in Madrid. The son of retired Ambassador Rosario V. Cariño, Jomari began his love affair with Spain by taking primary education in Barcelona. Over the years, he has wandered around museums, flea markets, churches and private collections in search of various art works by Filipino and foreign artists on the Philippines as well as artifacts—a labor of love for him. Cecile Alvarez and I put him on our regular Sunday evening dzRH show, so he could tell the nation about his discoveries. And what a story he had about life in colonial Philippines and the colorful lives our ilustrados lived in Spain.

* * *

What Cariño did was to catalogue works by RP artists in Spain, with the assistance of Ricky Jose. Their research found its way into four books, written by such writers as Santiago Pilar, Felice Sta. Maria and Brenda Fajardo, that have won various book awards here. He brought the books for our taping and we saw glimpses of a Manila long gone and as graceful as any European city, with very colorful houses and beautiful buildings and people wearing spectacular clothes—clearly indicative of a superior culture. He also brought letters of Rizal and Juan Luna as well as samples of our old piña he had bought in Spain.

One book, "Jose Honorato Lozano, Filipinas 1847," contains the paintings of Lozano, the foremost Filipino painter of the 19th century and a disciple of Damian Domingo. The son of the keeper of the Manila Bay lighthouse, Lozano charmingly chronicled the day-to-day life in Intramuros and Binondo.

Another book, "Discovering Philippine Art in Spain," was sponsored by the DFA as part of our centennial celebration. A third book, "Album, Islas Filipinos 1663-1888," a compilation of Filipino and foreign artists' works on RP, features the fabulous collection of Teyet Pascual on Damian Domingo and Justiniano Asuncion. It also shows the collection of drawings from the famed "Malaspina Expedition" of Museo Naval and Museo de America in Madrid. Admiral Malaspina, an Italian in the Spanish Crown's employ, traveled to South America, Australia and Asia to gather information on animal life and flora in the 1780s. A number of drawings on RP life at that time are included in the book.

A fourth book of Cariño's, titled "Piña, El Tejido del Paraiso," was inspired by Lourdes Reyes-Montinola's pioneering work on this wonderful fabric. He gathered and collected antique specimen of our piña in Spain, he exhibited them, together with contemporary piña pieces, in Madrid last August. About 60,000 people came to view the exhibit, among them the lovely Isabel Preysler.

Coming and going in Boracay

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

BORACAY—AS I WRITE THIS, I'M ENJOYING our last day on this island, facing a seemingly endless parade of locals and foreign and domestic tourists clad in various stages of undress, strolling to and fro on the world-famous White Beach.

This time around, we're staying at Willy's, one of the first beachfront resorts to be established here and known for "Willy's Rock," perhaps the most famous landmark in Boracay which stands just a few meters from the resort's entrance.

The trip had been the result of a brainstorm after I received an invitation to give a talk in Kalibo. It then occurred to me that I might as well organize a family outing to Boracay, though my family chose to leave me to the tender ministrations of my hosts in Kalibo once we got there while they proceeded posthaste to enjoy the sights and swimming in Boracay.

Thanks to my gracious hostess in Kalibo, Rebi Mobo, and to Ester Briones, who arranged for my transport, I arrived in Caticlan the next day safe and rested. But I was not prepared for the crowd that waited at the terminal. How could the island accommodate all these people? But it seems the local authorities have the routine down pat, and paying the terminal fee, pump-boat fare and local tax was relatively painless, while queuing to board the boat was orderly, despite my porter's urgings to jump the line.

Kalibo folk were all agog the day before about a controversial decision of the provincial board, apparently opposed by the mayor of Malay, to implement the "single entry/exit" policy, which meant travelers, regardless of their final destination in Boracay, would have to disembark/embark at a single location, the jetty in Cagban. But the decision apparently underwent some modification, so the pump boat I was on was still able to drop me off at the Station 1, a short walk to Willy's.

* * *

BUT the "single exit" rule now applies. When my son and his girlfriend left Sunday, we saw them off at Cagban Jetty, where, after paying the required fees, they lined up once again to board the boats to Caticlan.

Listening to my hosts and the local media discuss the issue, the impression I got was that the provincial government had crafted the policy both to placate the members of the transport cooperative, as well as consolidate the collection of local taxes. Oddly enough, the most important people, the people who had made Boracay the revenue-generation machine it has become, didn't seem to have been consulted. Did anybody bother surveying the tourists—local and foreign—about what loading/unloading scheme they preferred, what was most convenient for them, what effect the scheme might have on their decision to return or stay away from Boracay?

Whatever, entry/exit schemes seemed farthest from the mind of the revelers in Boracay, especially on Saturday night, which happened to be the opening of the grand summer fest. We made our way to D'Mall in the center of the island, for dinner that evening. My son had suggested we try Greek cuisine, among the numerous international cuisines offered on the island. We ended up at Cyma, a relatively new dining place, because, my son said, "it seems the more authentic" between the two Greek places.

We weren't sorry. For starters, we chose the Meze Combination, which allows diners to try the four Mezes or appetizers offered, including humus and a cucumber and yogurt dip. Upon the suggestion of one of the proprietors, we also tried the Spinach and Artichoke Fondue, so "yummy" we found ourselves moaning with pleasure. I also wanted to try the Calamarakia, deep fried baby squid that came with a sour cream dip. This was enough for me, though the other members of our party also ordered Pork Souvlaki, Lamb Chops and Mahi-mahi, which all came with an excellent accompaniment of rice, sultanas and pine nuts cooked inside hollowed-out peppers. Delicious!

Indeed, there's more to Boracay than sand and sea and shopping and all sorts of water sports. For now, it's one of the best culinary spots in the country, too!

* * *

THE REASON I was in Kalibo was to address the audience at the awarding rites of the 2006 Women Achievers of Aklan, sponsored by the Soroptimist International of Kalibo. SI Aklan president Rebecca "Rebi" Mobo, widow of former governor Ben Hur Mobo, had invited me to speak at the ceremonies, which were held on March 31, the last day of Women's Month.

Congratulations to the awardees, all of them distinguished and accomplished Aklanons! They are: Teresita Vega Berner, a career diplomat who currently holds the rank of ambassador and serves as the director of the Foreign Service Institute; Gabrielle "Billie" Calizo, the province's first woman representative and well-known in the field of travel and entrepreneurship; Jindra Linda Demeterio, the first woman to become regional director of the Department of Agriculture and a gender and development advocate; and Sonia Villanueva Seville, who recently retired as a regional director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and is now involved in training future scientists.

Sen. Manuel Villar, who was in town to address the commencement ceremonies at a local college, also dropped by to congratulate the awardees.

A note about the venue. The testimonial banquet was held at the Capt. Gil M. Mijares Building, whose restoration had been a project of Billie Calizo's during her term. Built during the Spanish era and standing at a strategic spot just opposite the cathedral, the building is a former armory that had last served as a dilapidated courthouse before its restoration. It now houses a museum and library as well as a social hall, while one side of the ground floor is given over to a police station. Truly an example of creative re-use and preservation!

The conundrum of scientific fraud

WORLD VIEW

Steve Fuller

SCIENCE, AND THE BEHAVIOR OF SCIENTISTS, has never been perfect. Consider the Korean scientist Hwang Woo-suk, whose claim to have extracted stem cells from human embryos that he cloned turned out to be based on phony research. Hwang has been fired by Seoul National University, and six of his co-workers have been suspended or had their pay cut.

Hwang and his colleagues are hardly alone. In response to the recurrence of well-publicized and highly damaging scandals in recent years, many universities and some entire national research funding agencies now convene "institutional review boards" to deal with breaches of what has come to be known as "research ethics."

But are such boards necessary? If so, in what spirit should they conduct their work?

From artists to scientists, all intellectual workers are preoccupied with the giving and taking of credit. Hiring, promoting and rewarding academic staff are increasingly based on "citation counts"—the number of times someone receives credit in peer-approved publications. Even if someone's work is criticized, it must be credited properly.

Credit is often given simply because someone has produced a creditable work. But, increasingly, the fixation on credit reflects the work's potential monetary value. And, however one defines the creditworthiness of intellectual work, one thing is clear: reported cases of fraud are on the rise.

Sometimes fraud consists in plagiarism: the culprit takes credit for someone else's work. However, especially in the most competitive scientific fields, fraud often takes the form of forgery: the culprit fabricates data. But in neither case has a standard method emerged for ensuring the integrity of research—or of the scientists who carry it out.

A useful simplification in addressing the potential work of research ethics panels is to consider two models of review: "inquisitorial" and "accusatorial." The inquisitorial model presumes that fraud is rampant, but often undetected. The accusatorial model adopts a less paranoid stance, presuming that researchers are innocent until proven otherwise.

The natural context for an inquisitorial system is a field where scientific integrity is regularly under threat because research is entangled with political or financial interests. Often, these entanglements are unavoidable, especially in the case of biomedical research. Here the inquisitors are part cost accountant, part thought police. They conduct spot-checks on labs to ensure that the various constituencies for scientific research are getting their money's worth.

The credibility of such a system relies on the inquisitors' ability to uphold standards of science that are genuinely independent from special interests both inside and outside the research community. Otherwise, inquisitorial ethics reviews could come to be regarded as nothing more than intellectual vigilantism.

Consider the Danish Research Council's ominously named Committee on Scientific Dishonesty, which was convened in 2002 following complaints raised against the political scientist Bjørn Lomborg, whose book "The Skeptical Environmentalist" purported to demonstrate that ecologists systematically biased their interpretation of data to support their political objectives.

The committee initially found Lomborg guilty of much the same error that he had alleged of the ecologists. However, the committee refused to comment on whether his behavior was normal or deviant for the field in question. This enabled Lomborg to appeal the verdict, successfully. In the end, the committee was itself reorganized.

In retrospect, the committee probably should have refused the case, given that Lomborg's book was subject to intense public scrutiny, often by experts writing (favorably) in The Economist and (unfavorably) in Scientific American. His was a genuine case in which intellectual work was given a fair trial in the proverbial "court of public opinion" and required no further oversight.

Indeed, Lomborg's case would seem to support the accusatorial model of ethics review, which assumes that scientists adequately regulate their own affairs through normal peer-review procedures. Here, scientific integrity is understood not as a duty to stakeholders—funders, companies, or, as with Hwang, politicians concerned about national prestige—but as a collective responsibility that is upheld by identifying and correcting errors before they cause substantial harm.

The accusatorial system is designed for those relatively rare cases when error slips through the peer-review net, resulting in some concrete damage to health or the environment, or causing the corruption of later research that assumes the validity of fraudulent work.

The countervailing assumptions of the inquisitorial and accusatorial systems reflect the ambiguity of the concept of scientific fraud. Many so-called frauds are cases in which researchers claimed credit for work they have not really carried out, but that pointed in the right direction and was eventually completed by others. Strictly speaking, they are guilty more of confusing the potential and the actual than the true and the false.

Indeed, by today's standards, Galileo and Mendel committed fraud, since they likely massaged their data to fit a neat mathematical formula. However, they remain scientific visionaries because others built so effectively on their "work." Of course, in their cases, no money changed hands and no one's life was jeopardized. Perhaps, from the point of view of research ethics, that makes all the difference.

Project Syndicate

Steve Fuller is professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick and author of "The Philosophy of Science and Technology Studies."

Relevance

YOUNG BLOOD

Fritz-Erich J. Baldoria

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

I COULD HEAR THE FAMILIAR SOUNDS OF TRUNCHEONS banging against shields. The anti-riot policemen had warned the crowd that they were moving to break up the rally. And that was the signal for us to disperse. Not because of fear, but because we were defenseless.

The warning gave us enough time to move to safer ground, behind the pedestrian railings near the Ayala-Paseo de Roxas intersection in Makati. We jeered at the police as they passed by, armed with Presidential Proclamation No. 1017. However, they did not seem to mind our taunts as they went after their favorite targets, the left-leaning organizations.

But as more of us gathered at the sidewalk denouncing the dispersal, the police turned their attention to us. *"Eto na!" I thought.*

Someone in our group said, *"Pag nagkabakbakan na, wala nang Bill of Rights. Hindi ka na pwedeng makipag-argumento!* (When violence erupts, the Bill of Rights is worth nothing. You cannot argue anymore)." Confronted with violence, I thought, lawyers are useless and irrelevant. Imagine yourself in the urban battlefields of Nazi-occupied Europe or the jungles of Vietnam. Your skills in law and argumentation are worthless when bullets start flying. On the other hand, doctors can treat the wounded; carpenters can build shelters for the weary troops, engineers can rebuild bridges to facilitate the transport of supplies; cooks can prepare meals; entertainers can lift up weary souls.

I've wanted to be a lawyer since I was 6 years old. My great grandfather was an esteemed trial lawyer, with offices at Escolta, Manila and Imus, Cavite. My grandfather was a lawyer for the common people and went on to serve in the Senate and the Department of Health. The tradition of having lawyers in the family skipped a generation. Now I am the only one among my relatives in the Philippines who wants to enter the legal profession.

My first love is not law, but politics. Before I knew what a lawyer was, I wanted to become president of the Philippines. But growing up in a political environment eventually led to a fascination with law. At a young age, I was convinced that taking up law was a prerequisite to election to public office. I should have listened to my relatives in the entertainment industry.

When my elders asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, my answer was always: to become president. But since I was growing up when Marcos was the dictator, I would qualify by adding, *"Kaya lang baka magalit si Marcos!* (The problem is, Marcos might get mad at me.)"

Marcos died before I entered high school. But I guess there was something more to my answer. Was the fear of Marcos very much ingrained in the subconscious of a child who lived under martial law? And is that fear being transplanted once again to our times?

After the impeachment court refused to open the second envelope in December 2000, many students and activists wore black as a statement of disgust. Our college community was preparing to join the protest rally at the Edsa Shrine when a high schoolmate dropped by our *tambayan* to pick up his girlfriend. Upon seeing many of us wearing black, he said, "Why are you in black? You are wasting your time. You are pathetic."

I was enraged by his comment, but just kept quiet. He was wrong, I think.

When I entered law school, I planned on being active both on and off campus. I thought that with little effort, I would sail through my academics.

That was a laugh. I've never had as much fun as in law school, but the fun has been more than offset by difficulties and disappointments. I had to learn how to manage time efficiently and study effectively, what things to concede and what to fight for. I had to choose my battles in order to win.

As I move closer to my graduation, I look back and forward. I've absorbed as much education as I can from our school and the environment in which I have been immersed. I'm trying to equip myself for the challenges that will try to beat me down. I feel confident and insecure at the same time.

The bar exam is the biggest hurdle immediately ahead of me, but it's after that I am sure when the real trouble begins. Where does one strike a balance between practicality and acting on one's social awareness? How do you meet your needs while responding to the demands of citizenship. How do you begin? What battles can I fight at this point? Thinking about all this makes me feel helpless. Sometimes it can become a burden to have the kind of enlightenment that a law education gives.

After five years, I sometimes wonder if anything worthwhile resulted from our effort in 2001. I know a lot in me has changed, but many things around me have not. This is probably one of the reasons for my feelings of helplessness and frustration.

Today, I find myself fighting for the same causes I had fought for in 2001. At that time, the principles were simple: justice, truth, good governance. Now, all these have to be unearthed from a complex layer of lies, deceit, corruption, violence and uncertainty. The causes have not changed but fighting for them has become more complicated. Still the values remain the same: justice, truth and good governance. While the circumstances have changed, we have to continue fighting for what is right because some people are too arrogant and stubborn to have a change of heart.

Going back to my thoughts on war, I ask again if the lawyer is relevant. Of course. The lawyer is there to fulfill his primary function of rendering justice by promoting peace. Justice can only be carried out in an environment of peace and under the rule of law. But peace does not mean the absence of conflict. And there is so much fighting to be done.

I hope that our young men and women will continue to examine with critical eyes the issues confronting our nation. I know there is only so much that students and young people can do. However, we should not be frustrated. All our young deeds will bear fruit some time. There is hope.

Fritz-Erich J. Baldoria, 27, is a graduating law student of the Ateneo de Manila School of Law. He is a legal assistant/researcher at M.M. Lazaro & Associates.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

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Questions to explain 'lack of outrage'

THE MARCH 22 COLUMN OF AMANDO Doronila was quite thought-provoking.

Despite the fact that "the findings of the surveys all indicate that the majority of the people want [Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo] to go and are dissatisfied with ... her performance," why aren't people marching to oust her, Doronila asked. Then he suggested certain questions for inclusion in survey questionnaires, presumably to delve into what the people think or feel about GMA.

May I add the following questions (they can be redesigned for opinion surveys) to find out why the widespread public dissatisfaction "has not translated into a mass political action that would force the President out of office:"

Are any or all of these reasons the answer why you do not join mass action to oust the President?

1. Fear or intimidation induced by the government?

2. Nothing will come out of the change of national leadership? Your lot will not be improved at all?

3. Better to make the most out of the situation—to take the opportunity of "sharing" resources (e.g., money) being doled out by an embattled administration?

Question for the local executives:

4. Because your survival is assured by your support of the President?

Question for local constituencies in certain provinces, cities, or municipalities where local executives are all out for GMA:

5. Are you with your governor or mayor in his or her support of the President?

The fact is it is highly possible that the local chief executives' motives in and reasons for supporting GMA could be different from those of their constituencies. It is faulty logic or immature reasoning to conclude that just because a governor or mayor is for the President, it follows that his/her constituency is also for her.

Also, recent historic events—like Edsa I and II—have shown that local politicians are like chameleons; they change colors to blend with the political jungle—to survive.

—EDMUNDO HOLAZO ESCALANTE, retired judge, Gubat, Sorsogon

New buildings for old trees in Manila

I SHARE THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY Dante C. Arganosa in his letter, titled "Lost, crumbling, disappearing historical landmarks." (PDI, 3/29/2006) Arganosa decried the irretrievable loss of some historical landmarks in Manila. Such loss clearly shows the government's utter lack of concern for relics of the past, whose preservation and maintenance are guaranteed by laws.

Europe is dotted with ancient castles, buildings, arches, walls, lighthouses and other edifices which now serve as monuments of its glorious past. On each of these buildings are epitaphs etched in metal to tell visitors about their history and significance.

The Philippines is a young country compared to the European nations. But even then, it is home to many structures built about a hundred years or so ago, like the ones Arganosa mentioned. But the current occupant of the Manila City Hall, which is itself one of Manila's oldest buildings, seems more preoccupied with accommodating the desires of some businessmen who are eager to cut the centuries-old trees so that they can replace them with commercial establishments. While modern city mayors in other countries are planting trees in their territories, Mayor Lito Atienza wouldn't mind doing away with them in his Manila.

Imagine Atienza as the mayor of New York City, setting about to replace the trees and greens of Central Park for more office buildings.

It would certainly show that this mayor has no common sense. And there would be public outrage.

—RAMON MAYUGA, GeRMayuga@aol.com

LETTERS

God's plan?

I FOUND GMA'S CLAIM, REPORTED IN the banner story "It's God's plan I'm here" with the subhead "GMA blames critics for excessive politicking" (PDI, 3/8/06) abhorrent for the following reasons:

1. It is not God's will that the police officers of President Macapagal-Arroyo beat up demonstrators for "illegal assembly."

2. God did not, does not and will never permit warrantless arrests in the guise of an "invitation."

3. It is not God's desire that GMA's people amass wealth through graft and corruption in government.

4. God could not have been pleased with the way anti-riot police dispersed violently a peaceful assembly of women during the celebration of the International Women's Day. (And GMA should be made to answer for that brutal dispersal, following the principle of command responsibility.)

GMA has resorted to using the name of God in her continuing attempt to make the Filipino people believe her, this after showing them that what she says is different from what she does.

And it certainly does not please God to see liars fooling His people.

—TRINIDAD ESTURAS PETEZA, JP Rizal Street, Bgy. Camambungan, Daet, Camarines Norte 4600

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Media vital to quality governance

ISIS INTERNATIONAL-MANILA, AN international women's communication NGO, supports the petition of media groups asking the government to stop imposing prior restraint on their work as journalists. (PDI, 3/22/06)

We are troubled and alarmed by the government's recent actuations—among them, the police's attempt to secure a search warrant against the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Secretary Michael Defensor's claim that lawsuits are being planned against two media personalities, the closure of Kodao Production's radio program in dzRJ, and the military's intelligence report linking INQUIRER editor Gerry Lirio and senior reporter Fe Zamora to a suspected coup financier.

One of the indicators of quality governance is accountability. A free media plays a crucial role in ensuring government accountability. Another indicator is "political instability and violence." What the continuing restiveness of civil society and calls for the President's resignation over the unresolved questions on the alleged wiretapping and electoral fraud indicate is obvious.

Between 1996 and 2004, the Philippines was given low quality governance ratings. (World Bank report, May 2005) This year's ratings remain dim.

—RAIJELI NICOLE, director, Isis International-Manila, 3 Marunong St., Barangay Central, Diliman, Quezon City

Legal basis for the demolition of shabu mall

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO THE LETTER of Ruben Rozal. (PDI, 3/13/06) While we respect his right to express his opinions, we feel that we have to clarify some of the issues he raised.

The demolition (of the shabu mall in Pasig) had legal bases—specifically, Article 695 in relation to Article 432 (to avert imminent danger and threatened damage) and Article 436 (condemnation or seizure by competent authority in the interest of health, safety and security). The action was also authorized by a city council resolution. Equally important was the clamor of the residents of the area for the demolition of the shanties inside the compound which had become a stigma to the community.

Rozal's suspicion—that the demolition was "really an attempt to destroy damaging evidence"—was not new to us. Mayor Vicente Eusebio's political detractors had earlier raised the same issue.

For Rozal's information, an ocular inspection and inventory of the items inside the shanties were conducted by the city's legal office and the Department of Social Welfare and Development prior to the demolition. Still photographs and video coverage were taken before and during the demolition. At no point during the inspection, inventory and picture/video-taking did we find "damaging pieces of evidence." Members of the local police force, the DSWD, and media were present and witnessed the actual demolition of the shanties.

May we also point out that under the provisions of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 confiscated evidence should be submitted to the PDEA Forensic Laboratory within 24 hours. It further states that a certification of the laboratory examination results, which shall be done under oath by a forensic laboratory examiner, shall be issued within 24 hours from receipt of the seized items.

The demolition of the cubicles inside the drug den was conducted on Feb. 15, 2006, four days after the raid and one day after the PDEA Forensic Laboratory would have issued its certification on the laboratory examination of the evidence recovered. This means the authorities would have already gathered all the evidence necessary to successfully prosecute the case.

We agree with Rozal that the drug menace is a real cause for concern and this is why we in the Pasig City government are doing our best to address this problem. In fact, through the Pasig Anti-Drug Abuse Council, we have been running an anti-drug information/education program as well as a rehabilitation program.

We would like to point out that there are those who want to exploit the "poisoned atmosphere" to gain political mileage. We just hope that Rozal will not be swayed by speculations, innuendoes or baseless accusations, even as we appeal to him to look at the facts.

—CARLOS ABESAMIS, Office of the City Legal Officer, Pasig City

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'Jueteng' returns; STL bet cards used

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—ATTEMPTS TO RESUME the illegal numbers game jueteng sprang up during the weekend in Pampanga and Olongapo City as its legal replacement, the small town lottery (STL) restarted its dry run in Angeles City and Bataan last week.

Seven suspected jueteng *cobradores* (collectors) were arrested in separate operations in the City of San Fernando and Santo Tomas town in Pampanga and in Olongapo City on April 1, according to Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapinid, Central Luzon police chief.

The suspects carried blank bet cards of STL and lotto, another state-run game, as they went about collecting bets for jueteng, its almost similar but illegal counterpart, reports showed.

The collectors carried jueteng paraphernalia, it was learned.

The government lotteries, Lapinid said, were "being used as cover." However, he said the efforts to resume jueteng were not being done in an organized scale.

The game was stopped in Central Luzon in May last year when the Senate investigated the claims of whistleblowers that close relatives of President Macapagal-Arroyo protected the underground lottery.

Of the attempts for the game's comeback, Lapinid said: "These appear to be isolated, done out of desperation by displaced collectors."

The Arroyo administration hatched the STL project as an antidote to jueteng. The Aquino administration did the same but failed, with STL ending up as a front for jueteng operations.

So far, Lapinid said Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac and Zambales remained jueteng-free. The game used to enjoy a strong following in those areas. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Reshuffle of customs men in Cebu stopped

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—THE RESHUFFLING of 20 top district officials of the Bureau of Customs has been suspended amid objections by customs brokers, businessmen and local officials.

Cebu Customs Collector Ma. Lourdes Mangaoang said she has been informed by Alexander Arevalo, acting Bureau of Customs commissioner, that Customs Personnel Order (CPO) 164-2006 had been suspended.

"Alexander Arevalo had called me 20 minutes ago and informed me that there is a directive from the higher office that the customs personnel order reassigning me to Iloilo is now suspended, and that Grace Caringal was directed to go back to Subic," Mangaoang said.

Arevalo, who was customs deputy commissioner, was designated as officer-in-charge of BOC after acting Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales left for Beijing yesterday.

Affected

Mangaoang was among the 20 Customs district collector who had been affected by the CPO issued by Morales last March 31.

Mangaoang was told to report to the Iloilo Port and would be replaced by Caringal, who was Subic Customs District Collector.

Her impending transfer raised protests from local officials and members of various business groups who sent letters and manifestos of support, asking President Macapagal-Arroyo to retain Mangaoang.

But Mangaoang said she received a call from Arevalo past 4 p.m. yesterday that the CPO had been suspended and all those affected by the order had to remain in their current positions.

It was not clear, however, if the suspension of the implementation of the order was temporary.

"I do not know (where the order came from). I did not ask anymore, I was just informed that the customs personnel order is suspended," said Mangaoang.

But she said she believed that officials in Manila might restudy and re-evaluate the order.

She added it was also possible that the CPO was suspended due to the strong resistance of local officials, customs brokers and businessmen in Cebu to her transfer.

Mangaoang said she was grateful to Mayor Tomas Osmeña and Cebu Representatives Antonio Cuenco, Raul del Mar and Nerissa Soon-Ruiz for supporting her.

Questioned

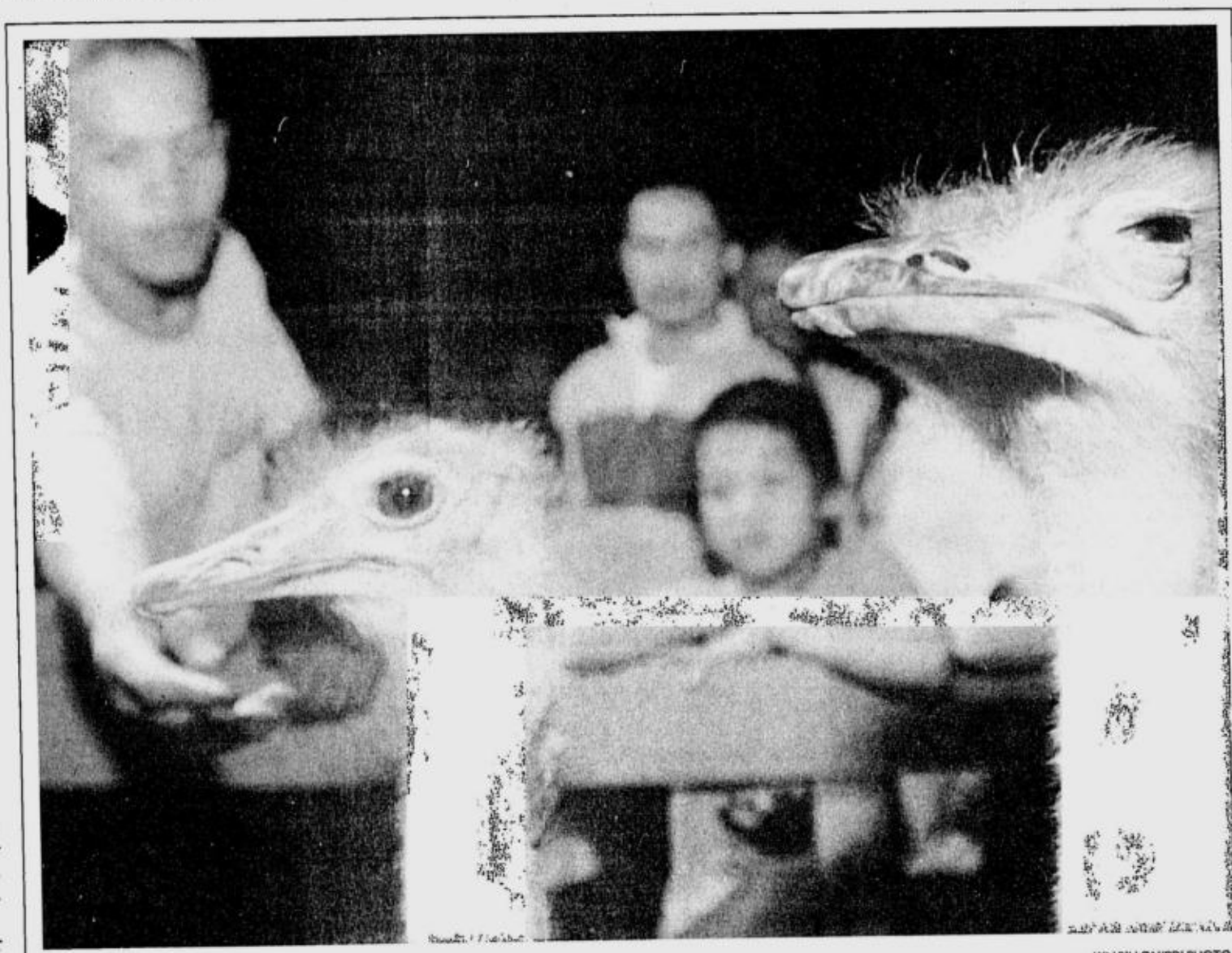
But she explained that she questioned the CPO issued by Morales because it lacked the signature of Finance Secretary Margarito Teves.

Under Administrative Order 133 issued by President Arroyo on Dec. 27, 2005, she said the secretary of finance has the power to reshuffle Customs personnel.

Mangaoang said the order was issued without consulting them. "We were not consulted, which is inhuman and it could also be a violation of one's human's rights."

Most Customs officials affected by the order also raised their objections to the order especially that most of them had already settled in their area of assignment.

She also denied that she was not able to meet the target collection in March, saying the Port of Cebu even exceeded the target of P364,358,000 by 32 percent because they were able to collect P365,511.824.



LYN RILLON/PDI PHOTO

BIRD FOOD
Onlookers crowd around a pen of ostriches at an agriculture fair in Cagayan de Oro City. Growers are promoting ostrich meat as a good alternative for its low cholesterol and fat content.

Tarlac newspaperman shot dead in jeep

TARLAC CITY—A COMMUNITY paper editor and columnist was shot and killed by armed men on Sunday in Barangay Armenia here, police said.

Orlando Tapios Mendoza, 58, of Barangay San Miguel, was driving his jeep on his way home from his farm when the men appeared from a grassy spot and shot him several times in the head and body, police said.

Mendoza, who wrote for the community paper Tarlac Profile, was the 76th media person killed since 1986, according to records of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP).

He was also the editor-in-chief of another weekly, the Tarlac Patrol, according to its publisher, Pacifico Guevarra.

Guevarra said Mendoza had a son studying at the Philippine Military Academy and a daughter who had just passed the medical board examinations.

While not discounting the possibility that Mendoza's death was media-related, Guevarra said he was more inclined to believe the victim was killed due to his involvement in a number of land disputes.

"He (Mendoza) was good at paperwork and he used his knowledge in helping people in the thick of disputes over land ownership and land titling. He must have earned the ire of certain people who lost in those disputes because he had helped their opponents," Guevarra said.

The victim was not exactly known as a critic of any politician, Guevarra added.

An M-14 rifle was found 10 meters from the victim's body, police said.

According to the NUJP, two journalists were killed this year. They were Rolando Cañete of dxPR in Pagadian City who was killed on Jan. 20, and Graciano Aquino of the Central Luzon Forum in Bataan who was killed on Jan. 21. *Russell Arador, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

94 Hawksbill turtles released to sea

A HAWKSBILL turtle starts its journey home from its nesting site in Punta Dumalag in Matina, Davao City. BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

DAVAO CITY—A TOTAL OF 94 HAWKSBILL hatchling were released to the sea here yesterday morning.

Since 2003, when efforts to rescue and conserve the critically endangered Hawksbill turtles that had been foraging and nesting along a shore in Punta Dumalag here began, close to 2,000 hatchling have been freed to their natural habitat.

"We are happy because of the active participation of the people and higher level of awareness about the importance of conservation of this marine species," said Councilor Leo Avila, who was asked to oversee the "Task Force Pawikan," a conservation program created by Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Bobby Onin, a local fisherman, said that when he was still a young boy, adults in their community would be hunting these giant turtles for its delectable meat and eggs, unmindful that their species is dwindling in numbers.

"It used to be so many of them that we as young boys would even gather the small ones and use them for racing," Onin said.

The secluded area along the beach had been known to him and others to be the nesting ground of the turtles. But through the years, the turtles' number declined prompting Onin to tell local officials about it.

"People now realize that we need to conserve these turtles," Onin said.

He had been delegated by Councilor Avila to guard the "protected area" and transfer the eggs or rescued turtles in a repository.

Avila said an information campaign had greatly helped in their conservation efforts, after different sectors from the academe and environmentalist groups like the World Wide Fund have also poured in their support.

Another proof of the effectiveness of the program is when 12-year-old Antonio Petellar recently rescued a Hawksbill turtle which was already in the brink of death in the sea.

He fished it out from the sea and gave it to Onin in an attempt to revive it.

Onin said the turtle apparently had been kept as a pet and was freed but it had difficulty acclimatizing in the seawater. *Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

THE TURTLES become instant celebrities as photographers and visitors take pictures of their return to their habitat.

Makiling trekkers warned on garbage

UP LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA—MT. MARIANG Makiling is again open for the Lenten Season wherein more than 10,000 mountaineers, campers, outdoor and nature lovers are again expected to troop to this breathtaking mountain to seek physical and mental relaxation.

"The religious will seek the wilderness for spiritual cleansing; others will just come to enjoy the beauty of the woods, but please don't leave a trace of garbage," appealed forester Roberto Cereno, head of the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems' (MCME) Parks and Ecotourism Division of the UPLB College of Forestry.

Dubbed as "Make It Makiling," this year's annual Lenten project aims to prevent damage to the mountain ecosystem.

The project is being implemented in partnership with the local government units of Los Baños, Laguna and Sto. Tomas, Batangas with the support of volunteer individuals, other government agencies, institutions, civic organizations and business establishments.

Cereno said waiting for visitors during the Holy Week (April 9-15) inside the Makiling Forest Reserve (MFR) are indigenous birds, butterflies and bees.

Activities consist of hiking, camping, picnic and communing with nature.

Recently, Laguna executives signed a manifesto expressing belief that the MFR, as an important biodiversity area and a vital watershed, will continue to be maintained and enhanced under the management of UPLB. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Fire strikes Aussie mining firm's office

CAMP SATURNINO DUMLAO, Nueva Vizcaya—Fire struck the field office of an Australian mining firm in a remote village in upland Kasibu town on Monday dawn, police said.

Senior Supt. Rogelio Damazo, acting provincial police director, said he had sent a team to investigate the cause of the blaze, which reportedly razed the office building owned by Australasia Philippines Mining Inc. (Apmi) in Didipio village, about 70 km from here.

No one was reported hurt in the fire.

The building is within a one-hectare compound in Didipio, which Apmi has been using for pre-operational activities for a proposed gold-copper venture there.

Apmi's $102-million project aims to process about 4 million ounces of gold and 1.5 billion ounces of copper deposits in Didipio for 14 years.

The company, formerly known as Climax Arimco Mining Corp., has been planning to start the mining project since January, but it has been met with stiff opposition from Didipio villagers and local officials.

Last year, the project was denied endorsement by the Kasibu and Didipio councils.

No damage estimates from the fire were immediately given, but company officials said the building contained desktop computers, several pieces of furniture, and company papers.

"It is a relatively small building, which is due for demolition. We have been intending to build a better office in another location," said Chito Gozar, Apmi manager for central liaison.

He said that despite Monday's incident, Apmi was bent on pushing through with the project.

"We see this as an unfortunate incident but this will not stop the company's venture to develop for the Filipino people the rich Didipio gold and copper deposits. We are a partner of the Philippine government as contractors," he said.

Gozar said he suspected that the blaze was deliberately started by small miners as a form of retaliation, after they were sent notices of their eviction from their mining activities on Dinkidi Hill, the proposed site of Apmi's project.

"It could have been done by a disgruntled miner who was making money and did not want to stop his illegal mining operations," he said.

About 300 small miners have trooped to the site, and bore holes for their manual gold panning activities. This prompted government officials here to launch a crackdown, with the help of the police and the military.

Gozar said the incident could aggravate the already tense situation in the area, and embolden persons who are against Apmi's operations.

"It's a given. But we are ready to face them and explain what we intend to do and why we're doing it. Meanwhile, we will leave the case to the police," he said.

He dismissed speculations that the burning of the building was linked to a Supreme Court decision upholding the constitutionality of the Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement issued to Apmi in 1994.

Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ELDERLY women join the parade to display a 50-ft tobacco that some mistook for pythons during a festival held in Candon City recently.

LEONCIO BALBIN JR./PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Candon City parades 50-ft tobacco in festival

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

CANDON CITY—WHAT DO YOU do when you have lots of damaged tobacco leaves?

During the recent tobacco festival here, Ephraim Dayap, National Tobacco Administration (NTA) supervisor for Candon, gathered all tobacco rollers in the city, created a pair of 50-foot cigars and paraded them.

The cigars were so long yet pliable that some watchers mistook them for a pair of pythons.

The cigars were the stars of the parade, followed by the dance troupe of 80 gay residents who called themselves the "Tropang Maton."

Wearing gold costumes under the sun, the group members did their "Carnival in Candon" impression though they failed to get major awards except the one for best costume.

To drum up support for tobacco farmers whose farms were damaged by heavy rains in January, the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and the NTA offered a P50-million loan for them.

Rep. Eric Singson, deputy speaker for Northern Luzon, said the loan would be used for the procurement of tobacco seedlings for the next planting season.

He also set up a P25-million back-up loan facility for farmers.

About P150 million was lost when heavy rains dampened the roots of tobacco plants, causing the leaves to droop. Most of the 2,000 hectares of tobacco farms affected are in the province's second district.

Singson said many farmers eventually recovered by planting tobacco seedlings immediately after the rains, while some planted corn.

He said he asked LBP officials to expand the coverage of the farmers' loan to include financial assistance to those who might want to apply for overseas jobs. He said the applicants should be among the affected tobacco farmers.

Candon Mayor Allen Singson said the city would go for the Guinness World Record for the longest cigar made by a single cigar maker. The current record is held by a Cuban farmer, Jose Castelar Cayro, who made a 20.42-meter cigar last year.

Candon is also vying to get the Guinness nod for the largest *calamay* or rice cake which the residents presented last week.

Grace Lapastora, Department of Trade and Industry provincial director, said the giant *calamay* weighed 2,547 kilos, and was made from 200 gantas of ground glutinous rice or *diket*, 1,200 kilograms of brown sugar, and meat from 2,000 coconuts.

This is heavier than the 2,097-kilo traditional rice cake made by the city of Niigata in Japan two years ago.

Feud emerging over Boracay rules for boat entry

By Hazel P. Villa
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—AS TOURISTS are expected to flock in the next few weeks to the famous Boracay Island, its municipality, the provincial government and transport groups are at loggerheads on where to make tourists embark and disembark, and where to load and unload cargo.

Boracay transport groups and the local government of Malay, to which Boracay belongs, are opposing a memorandum of Gov. Carlito Marquez, ordering full implementation of Provincial Ordinance No. 15-03 that imposes a one-entry, one-exit policy for the island as part of safety and convenience measures for tourists.

The ordinance designates the Cagban Jetty Port in Boracay's Barangay Manoc-manoc as the sole entry-exit point of all vessels from the mainland Caticlan Jetty Port and Passenger Terminal (CJPPT) and from other points of origin as far as Romblon, Mindoro and Manila.

Under the ordinance, all vessels will be subjected to proper port clearance before any departure. Their passengers and cargoes will also undergo security inspection.

The measure was approved on Oct. 5, 2005 and was supposed to take effect on April 1, 2006.

But the Malay municipal government and the Caticlan Boracay Transport Multipurpose Cooperative (CBTMPC) are opposing this scheme that is supported by the Department of Tourism.

They filed a petition for declaratory relief and injunction in January to stop the province from implementing the ordinance.

At the same time, they are holding on to Municipal Ordinance No. 157-2002 that allows pump boats to enter and leave the island through Boat Stations 1, 2, and 3; as had been the practice.

Malay Mayor Ceciron Cawaling described the provincial ordinance as highly unconstitutional as it restricted the basic rights of an individual to travel under its one-entry, one-exit policy.

"It violates the due process and equal protection clause, as the same do not apply to all boat owners," Cawaling said.

Gov. Carlito Marquez said that because the town of Malay failed to get a temporary restraining order from the court, the ordinance would be implemented on April 1 as scheduled.

But on Saturday, Marquez gave in and temporarily allowed pump boats to unload passengers and cargo at the three boat stations at White Beach.

The compromise is called "multiple entry, one exit" because the pump boats are told not to stay long on the beach but move to the Cagban Jetty Port and use it to pick up passengers and then exit.

The ordinance will be fully implemented on Friday when Boat Stations 1, 2 and 3 will be closed to any vessel, except for those that cater to "special arranged trips for tourism purposes," referring to resort boats.

Marquez said the one-entry, one-exit policy would be applied for a short period while the province was still "fine-tuning" its salient points.

"We have to come up with a formula acceptable to both parties so as not to jeopardize our tourists. This problem (if not solved) would create confusion and could prove disastrous to our tourism industry," Marquez said on Saturday.

Godofredo Sadiasa, CBTMPC chair, agreed, saying the tension would have adversely affect the tourism industry in Boracay if left unsolved.

ONE OF the hottest destinations during the vacation months, Boracay is now reeling from a feud between the provincial government of Aklan and the municipal government of Malay over where to unload passengers and cargo going to the resort.

ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

RP veggie industry survives smuggling, but not importation

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE government's liberal policy on agriculture may have halted the smuggling of foreign vegetables but the local vegetable industry is still hurting from the entry of imported products, a member of a presidential task force against vegetable smuggling said.

The policy's success, according to Alfredo Alangdeo, has caused a problem among the province's industry leaders and farmers since agriculture and trade officials are also preparing to welcome imported vegetables on a zero-tariff scheme.

The situation is that while local farmers need no longer worry over the arrival of smuggled products, they now have to compete just the same with foreign vegetables that enter the country through legal importation, he said.

Alangdeo, who is also the liaison officer of the vegetable trading post here, gave the update to agriculture scientists of the Fulbright scholarship program at the Benguet State University here recently.

He said the government had to liberalize its policy on vegetable imports in compliance with its free trade commitments as member of the World Trade Organization.

The effect is that the country will have to allow vegetable importation, a move that will force importers to do away with smuggling, he said.

But Alangdeo said that in return, legal importation had brought about the unabated entry of foreign vegetables that renewed local farmers' headaches over a reduced market.

"Worse, such liberal policy has caused other problems like technical smuggling," he said.

Technical smuggling happens when importers conceal the true contents of their shipments or undervalue the volume of their imports contrary to what is stated in their import permits.

The government has adopted measures to safeguard the local vegetable industry by imposing trade restrictions and high tariffs, but Alangdeo said the effects have yet to be felt by farmers.

In 2001 alone, he said, the country imported P328.7 million worth of foreign vegetables, a marked increase from the P295 million worth of imports the previous year.

In 2004, the Bureau of Plant Industry issued 720 import permits for 36,424,210 kilograms of assorted vegetables.

Last year, 240 permits were issued for 8,339,780 kg of foreign vegetables.

The vegetables included potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, lettuce, carrots, garlic and onions—products which are also commonly produced in the Cordillera.

Alangdeo said that for the last few months, customs authorities had seized 51 container vans for technical smuggling of foreign vegetables.

Their importers' papers showed fruits or non-agricultural products, but they actually contained carrots and other vegetables, he said. *Delmar Cariño, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Consumers warned reusing plastic bottles can cause cancer

COTABATO CITY—A MATH AND science professor here has alerted residents against the reuse of plastic bottles used for mineral water and other liquid products.

Marino Ridao, professor at state colleges here and in Maguindanao and a member of the city's legislative council, warned that plastic bottles known as polyethylene terephthalate, or PET, "when used more than once has cancer-causing substance."

The plastic, according to Ridao, "contains a potentially toxic substance known as carcinogenic element or diethylhydroxylamine (DEHA)."

"This should be discussed by other experts because of the danger it poses to humans, especially children who use recycled mineral water bottles made of plastic," Ridao told Catholic-run radio station dxMS here on Monday.

In Dubai, according to the article, a 12-year-old girl died after frequent use (16 straight months) of a mineral water bottle as she used to carry this fancy-looking plastic container to school.

He explained, though, that mineral water bottles are safe "for one-time use only."

He added that, "If you keep them longer, it should not be more than a few days (a week maximum) and keep them away from heat as well."

"Repeated washing and rinsing can cause the plastic to break down and the carcinogens (cancer-causing chemical agents) can leak into the water you are drinking," Ridao said. *Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Thai PM considers quitting after poll protest vote

From page A1

election, with 85 percent, or 28,084,686 votes counted.

The Election Commission has not yet released comprehensive official vote totals.

Thaksin, speaking on government-operated TV Channel 11, said his party received 16 million votes in national election, down from 19 million last year.

Thaksin has frequently cited the 19 million popular votes his party won nationally in last year's election as legitimizing his rule.

Results were still far from complete, though preliminary figures from Bangkok—more complete than from anywhere else in the country—showed strong sentiment against Thaksin.

At the same time, Thaksin's party was virtually assured of holding a monopoly of seats in Parliament, in part because the three parliamentary opposition parties boycotted the polls.

Minimum turnout requirements mean some parliamentary seats will remain vacant. This will force a series of by-elections that will delay the convening of a new Parliament and raise constitutional questions about whether Thaksin can form a government without another national election.

"In some districts, we failed. I have to accept that we failed," Thaksin told reporters. "Let's talk again after the vote count is finished. If you ask why I'm speaking like this, I'm not saying that I'm going to stay or quit, but please help me find a way toward unity. I don't have to be prime minister, but I ask that there be unity in the country."

Thaksin had made similar statements before, but this was the first time he publicly considered his options after the election, which he called three years early.

The crisis has taken its toll on the economy, paralyzing business decision-making and sapping the stock market, Southeast Asia's second-worst performer this year after Malaysia.

Rural strongholds

Bangkok has been the center of the campaign to force Thaksin out of office, but with the number of abstentions outnumbering the votes for Thaksin's party in most districts, the depth of the feeling against him has finally been measured.

What remained to be seen, because of the slow vote count, was Thaksin's overall strength nationwide, especially in the rural north and northeast, his strongholds. The south, historically a stronghold of the opposition Democrat party, voted strongly against Thaksin, but is underpopulated with relatively few seats in Parliament.

Thaksin had boasted frequently of his party's 19 million popular votes last year, and a failure to meet or beat that figure would undercut his claims to legitimacy.

The mixed results, with neither side winning a commanding victory, means that the political divide that has caused a crisis in administration over the past few months is unlikely to be easily resolved.

Anti-Thaksin protest leaders have already scheduled new demonstrations demanding his ouster, resuming where they had left off before the election, when they drew as many as 100,000 people to spirited antigovernment rallies.

Financial market analysts, concerned that extended political instability could hurt Thailand's economy, expressed concern about the situation.

"I've not heard anyone convincingly say that this is going to resolve the political situation," said Merrill Lynch's head of emerging Asia currency strategy Simon Flint. In light of the boycott and abstentions, "this election is fundamentally illegitimate."

Supavud Saicheua, Phatra Securities head of research, said Thaksin was apparently surprised by the magnitude of the abstentions and spoiled ballots, which he indicated by canceling a news conference Sunday night.

"The magnitude, the intensity of the opposition is surprising," Supavud said.

The opposition boycott of the poll left Thaksin's ruling party uncontested in 278 of 400 constituencies for the lower house of Parliament, leaving little doubt from the start that the embattled prime minister would be returned to office.

Constitutional chaos

However, political analysts predict that some ruling party candidates, particularly in Bangkok and the south, will not be able to take office because of minimum requirement laws.

The opposition hopes the boycott will make it impossible to fill all 500 legislative seats, which many legal experts say could make it impossible to convene Parliament and form a new government under the Thai constitution.

"It's time to bring law and order," Thaksin told reporters after voting with his children, whose tax-free $1.9 billion sale of the telecoms empire he founded galvanized the street protests in January.

An opposition boycott of the election, billed by Thaksin as a referendum on his leadership, had already guaranteed constitutional chaos because of the inevitability of empty seats in Parliament, which must be filled for a government to be formed.

Cooling-off period

In the Muslim-majority far south, where Thaksin is blamed for a resurgence of separatist unrest, election officials had to suspend counting in one constituency after the "no vote" tally filled up all the space on their counting forms. *Reuters, AP and AFP*

SC decision clears way for mining project

From page A1

from proceeding with the project, according to the court ruling released to the media yesterday.

Arimco Mining Corp., which was renamed Climax-Arimco Mining Corp., executed a financial and technical assistance agreement (FTAA) with the Ramos administration in June 1994 for 37,000 hectares in Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino. It has not gone past the exploration stage due to the legal challenges.

The Didipio-Earth Savers' Multi-Purpose Association Inc. (Desmpa) had asked the court to compel the government to repeal the Mining Act of 1995 and declare the DENR's agreement with Climax-Arimco illegal.

In a ruling on March 28, the court instead ruled there was no basis for the contention that the Mining Law failed to provide just compensation for privately owned property on the project site.

The Supreme Court said there was no longer a need for the court en banc to tackle the case filed by Desmpa because its first division did not declare unconstitutional any law or regulation.

It said the first division merely followed the full court's earlier decision in the La Bugal B'laan v Ramos case.

Positive signal

In the ruling, the court said the government could "compel the (foreign firm's) compliance with mandatory requirements on mine safety, health and environment protection, and the use of antipollution technology and facilities."

Climax-Arimco chair Jose P. Leviste Jr. said the ruling would send a positive signal to investors to pursue sustainable mining in the country.

"This would generate more confidence from the international and local investors. Our lenders would be able to support our financial requirements now," he told the INQUIRER.

Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez, Chamber of Mines president, said the ruling would lead to more investments in the Philippines.

"With this decision, both local and foreign investors have been reassured that the Philippines remains an investment destination and we can now expect additional investments pouring in," he said.

Attending a forum in Singapore, Romualdez said an additional $500 million would be poured into several mining projects.

These include the plan of Coral Bay Nickel Corp. to double its capacity that requires $285 million in fresh capital, the infusion of $100 million in the Climax-Arimco project, and the $171-million capital needed to restart the Atlas Mining Carmen Copper project in Cebu.

With closure in the legal issues against the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, a new generation of mining projects that adheres to environmental protection, social responsibility, protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, transparency in operations, and tax payments will create jobs and livelihood in the rural communities, according to Romualdez.

President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier this year sought to reassure nervous businessmen in the country that their investments in the resources sector were safe amid an antimining campaign by Catholic bishops.

Moral issue

Antimining Catholic bishops were unfazed by the Supreme Court's decision upholding the constitutionality of the Mining Act.

The issue of mining was not only legal, but more importantly moral, Bishops Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon and Leonardo Medroso of Borongan, Samar, told the INQUIRER in response to the decision.

"It is just a legal statement, a privilege of the Supreme Court to make as an independent branch of government," Bastes said.

"The content of the Mining Act—whether moral or beneficial to the country—is another big question."

Bastes, who like Medroso is at the forefront of the campaign against the ill effects of large-scale mining in the country, maintained that the law "can and must be amended or drastically modified."

Bastes heads the commission formed by Malacañang to investigate the two mine spills caused by Lafayette Philippines Inc. on Rapu-Rapu Island in Albay.

The Supreme Court was compelled to cite the La Bugal ruling of 2004, which was penned by then Associate Justice Artemio Panganiban, now the Chief Justice, in view of the fears raised by the petitioner, Desmpa, that implementing rules and regulations (IRR) would make "it possible for FTAA contracts to cede over to a fully foreign owned corporation full control and management of mining enterprises."

Passive regulator

This setup, Desmpa said, would reduce the government to a "passive regulator dependent on submitted plans and reports, with weak review and audit powers."

In effect, the Mining Act's IRR will "cede beneficial ownership of the mineral resources to the foreign contractors."

Associate Justice Minita V. Chico-Nazario, who penned the March 28 decision, said the government "possesses the means by which it can have the ultimate word in the operation of the enterprise, set directions and objectives, and detect deviations and noncompliance by the contractor."

"In others words, the FTAA contractor is not free to do whatever it pleases and get away with it; on the contrary, it will have to follow the government line if it wants to stay in the enterprise," the court said, quoting the La Bugal decision.

As stated in the La Bugal decision, the Mining Act of 1995 "vests in the government more than sufficient degree of control and supervision over the conduct of mining operations."

Nazario's decision said "the 1987 Constitution allows the continued use of service contracts with foreign corporations as contractors who would invest and operate and manage extractive enterprises, subject to the full control and supervision of the state."

Ball in Congress

Medroso said the "ball is in the hands of Congress," ostensibly holding on to Ms Arroyo's promise to look into the Mining Act. The President made the promise during a dialogue with antimining bishops in Manila last month.

"The Supreme Court does not frame laws," Bastes said, describing the act as "defective."

"The only way out is to go back to Congress," he said.

Medroso wants to make sure that mining operators are obliged to protect the environment and rehabilitate the surroundings once their operations are over.

He cited experiences like that in Surigao and in his diocese where a big mining company merely left without cleaning up its mess.

Opposition to continue

The Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center Inc. (LRC), counsel of Desmpa, said the high court's decision did not come as a surprise because the same justices who voted in the La Bugal case, which first upheld the constitutionality of the Mining Act in 2004, concurred in the decision.

The LRC said the Supreme Court decision would not end opposition to large-scale mining projects in the country.

"That's just one contract. There are still many requirements from the DENR and the local governments before they can proceed with their operation," LRC-Luzon's Melizel Asuncion said.

The center, in fact, had filed another petition for mandamus with the Regional Trial Court of Bambang on March 8.

It asked the court to compel the DENR to cancel the environmental compliance certificate of Climax-Arimco because the firm had failed to comply with the requirements.

The ECC requires the submission of a municipal council resolution giving consent to the mining project in a town. The municipality rejected the mining project. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra and AFP*

Filipino wins int'l horror film festival

From page A1

phone interview.

Previous winners in the BIFFF include horror masters Wes Craven ("People Under the Stairs"), Sam Raimi ("The Gift"), Jee-woon Kim ("A Tale of Two Sisters") and James Wan ("Saw").

Now on its seventh year, the Orbit previously honored directors Christopher Nolan ("Batman Begins"), Takashi Miike ("One Missed Call") and Gaspar Noë ("Irreversible"), said Laranas.

The Orbit honor, according to Laranas, is awarded to "new filmmakers who are making a debut in the international scene."

"It has been a while since an Asian won the award," he noted. "Previous Orbit winners went on to make bigger movies. Asians cornered the Orbit this year."

Hello, Hollywood

Variety reported in its March 28 issue: "[Orbit's] special mention went to 'The Beautiful Washing Machine,' directed by Malaysia's James Lee."

Laranas, who had signed up with Hollywood talent agency International Creative Management (ICM), is currently working on an English-language remake of "Sigaw," now dubbed "The Echo," with Los Angeles-based scriptwriter Stephen Susco and producer Roy Lee.

Susco penned the Hollywood version of the Japanese hit "The Grudge." Lee is producing "The Departed," with director Martin Scorsese and actor Leonardo DiCaprio.

"The Departed" is a remake of another Asian hit "Infernal Affairs," which originally top-billed Hong Kong stars Andy Lau and Tony Leung Chiu-Wai.

A-list horror movie

Laranas said the script for "Sigaw" now has a base price of $350,000 (P17,949,400)—meaning it could still go higher. "My cowriter Roy Iglesias and I will not only get credits, but also proceeds from the sale of the script."

The Brussels victory could mean bigger business for "Sigaw" in Hollywood, he said.

"My ICM agent Renee Tab was very excited when she learned about the Brussels win," Laranas said. "Stephen and Roy were so happy about the film's latest award. To think it was first released way back in 2004 [as an entry in the Metro Manila Film Festival]!"

Last year, "Sigaw" won Best Music for Jesse Lucas at the Los Angeles Screamfest, another A-list horror film festival.

In February, the movie was also screened at another prestigious horror film fest, the Fantasporto in Portugal, before proceeding to the BIFFF.

Laranas said the Brussels victory was significant because "it proves that the local movie industry is not dying nor dead ... Filipino filmmakers are still fighting to be recognized and to make quality films. When they talk of horror films, Filipinos will be mentioned along with the Japanese and Koreans. There are a lot of talented Filipinos out there."

Next stop

Laranas expressed the hope he would be able to cast homegrown star Iza Calzado in the Hollywood remake. Calzado won an Urian Best Supporting Actress award for the horror film last year.

"A talent like Iza deserves to be seen by the world. If I cannot cast her in 'The Echo,' I have other scripts in the offing. Right now, I am working on a psychological thriller," Laranas said.

He added that he would only collaborate with the movie's producer, Roselle Monteverde-Teo of Regal Entertainment, in his next local project.

Next stop for "Sigaw" is the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival in May.

Triplets in 2-3-4 finish in QC public high school

From page A1

Gerome ranked second; Germond, third, and Geroni, fourth.

Kevin Gil Guanzon of Montalban, Rizal, was valedictorian.

It was a proud moment for the triplets' parents—Charito, a public schoolteacher, and Geronimo, a former security guard.

"I was surprised when I learned they would graduate Nos. 2, 3 and 4. We never pressured them to do well in school—just to try their best," Charito said.

"But I told them they shouldn't disgrace me because I am also a teacher," she added, laughing.

Charito teaches at the Ponciano Bernardo Elementary School.

Blessings times three

Fifteen years ago, the couple was almost overwhelmed by the task of simultaneously raising three boys. Having planned and prepared for only one child, they found themselves scrambling for money to buy milk and diapers for three.

Instead of feeling burdened, Charito and Geronimo said the blessings came—threefold.

The identical brothers grew up to be fine young men, who studied their lessons and listened to their parents, said Charito in an interview.

"I don't force them to study, but our arrangement is that they should do their schoolwork for at least an hour a day," she said.

When Gerome delivered the welcome address on recognition day, he asked his fellow graduates to "aim higher" and reach for their dreams.

Although the boys had transferred to the school on their fourth year from their old school in Pateros, they got excellent grades and were eligible for honors, said PBHS principal Getulio Oliveros Jr.

Friendly competition

"In comparison to the other students, they always impressed me as fine boys. They did very well in their academics even if they were newly transferred," Oliveros said.

The boys admitted to competing among themselves, but added that it was just a friendly game of one-upmanship.

"We don't study together. Then we try to see who gets the best scores in tests," Germond said.

Charito related how Gerome, the math whiz among the three, often turned up his nose whenever his siblings asked for help with their assignments.

Science is the favorite subject of Gerome and Germond, while Geroni favors English. The three, who are all left-handed like their father, also differed in their attitudes toward school projects, she said.

Diverse interests

"Gerome is very serious, while Germond can be careless. Geroni, on the other hand, is so meticulous, sometimes he would be late in submitting his work," Charito said.

Although the three have different *barkada* (peer groups) in school, they always end up going out together, Geroni said.

But soon, college will separate the boys. Gerome will study computer engineering at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City, while Geroni will take up nursing at Fatima College.

Germond is still deciding between a course in architecture at the Technological Institute of the Philippines or in information technology at Informatics.

Amazing triplets

Gerome said he would miss his brothers, while Gerome had a more upbeat attitude: "Now, we'll be able to do what we want without pressure. When we're together, sometimes we disagree on where to go or what to do."

Geroni said he and his brothers would still see a lot of each other at home—a modest house in Barrio Panopio, Cubao.

City Councilor Ariel Inton learned about the amazing triplets when he delivered the graduation address on the school's Recognition Day.

"I was looking at them as they went up the stage and I wondered why they looked alike. Then I was told they were triplets," he said.

Inton relayed the story to Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr., who promised college scholarships for the boys with the help of city officials and representatives.

Rep. Mary Ann Susano promised to shoulder Gerome's schooling.

Yesterday, the boys' feat was formally recognized during the flag-raising ceremony at Quezon City Hall.

Belmonte described the boys' achievement as "very unique," adding that it was the first time he had heard of triplets graduating within the top four of their class.

Charito said raising three boys was triply hard because they had to make do with her meager earnings as a public schoolteacher. Her husband Geronimo is looking for a job, she said.

Her children's achievements more than made up for their hardships, she said. The Hipolitos have another child, 8-year-old Charlene Joy, who is also an honor pupil in her Grade 2 class.

Separated in first year

When Charito gave birth on Oct. 7, 1990 by caesarian section to triplets, she remembered feeling shocked, scared and confused.

"We only prepared for one child, and we had three," she said.

In the first year, the boys were separated. Gerome went with relatives in Tarlac, while Geroni lived with his grandparents in Pateros. Charito said only Germond stayed with them.

But when the triplets were old enough to walk, Charito decided to reunite the boys.

"Our relatives kept crying when I took Gerome and Geroni back, but I knew I had to, before my children began to forget me," Charito said. *With a report from Melissa de Quiros*

Ship with 19 Pinoys hijacked

12 pirates boarded oil tanker off Somalia

KUALA LUMPUR – A DOZEN HEAVILY armed pirates have hijacked a UAE-registered oil tanker along with 19 Filipino crew members off the coast of Somalia, an international piracy watchdog said on Monday.

"Twelve pirates armed with machine guns, AK47 rifles and sidearms boarded the tanker off Mogadishu during daylight," Noel Choong, head of the Piracy Reporting Center of the London-based International Maritime Bureau, told AFP.

Choong said the United Arab Emirates oil tanker had earlier discharged its cargo at Mogadishu port and was hit on March 29 after leaving port.

Maritime officials identified the ship as "Lin 1." Choong said the pirates are holding the ship off the coast of Somalia and are demanding "a huge sum of money" from the owners for its release.

The international coalition forces consisting of US, British and Dutch warships that are helping to police the area have been informed of the latest hijack, he said.

Choong said the pirates were holding the ship inside Somalia's territorial waters and this could pose a problem should the foreign ships want to intervene.

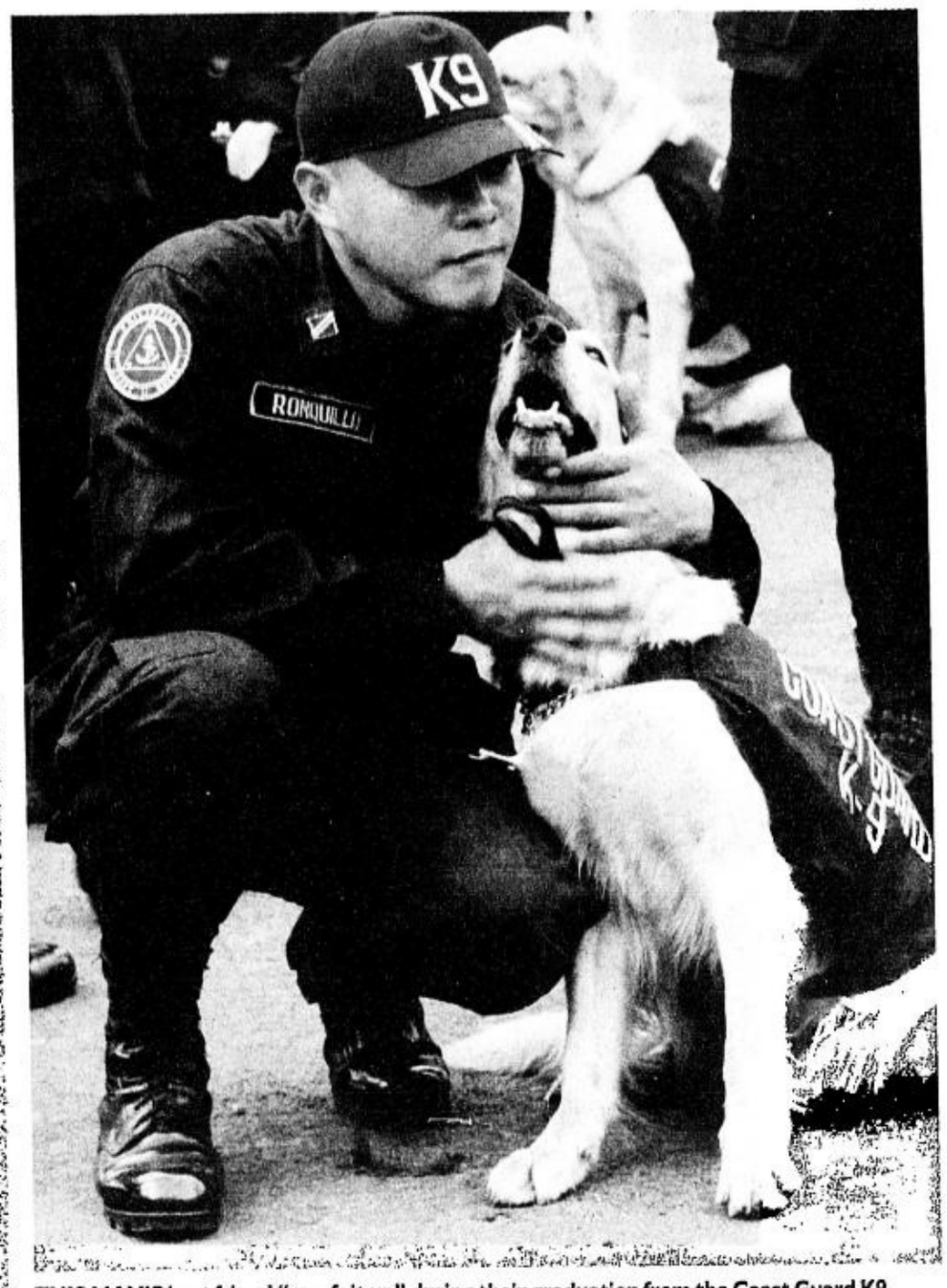
Since March 15, 2005, pirates have hit 40 ships off Somalia but many more attacks have gone unreported, he said.

Choong urged ship captains to keep their vessels at least 200 kilometers away from Somalia's coast to avoid pirate attacks.

"The pirates are armed and they will not hesitate to fire to stop ships," he warned.

In a recent incident, pirates fired at a UN food aid ship in an attempt to hijack it. Pirates had hijacked an Indian ship, the Bhakti Saga, on Feb. 26. Its 25-member crew was only freed on March 29.

The waters around Somalia are among the most dangerous in the world, with heavily armed gangs prepared to venture far offshore to attack vessels. *AFP*



THIS MAN'S best friend "woofs it up" during their graduation from the Coast Guard K9 Handlers' Course at the Manila North Harbor Monday. REM ZAMORA

19 grads going straight to work from K9 school

By Leila B. Salaverria

WITH SECURITY IN MANY PARTS OF THE country "going to the dogs," these new graduates need not worry about employment.

Indeed, this class is a different breed.

Composed of Labradors, German Shepherds and Belgian Malinois, the 19 graduates of the Philippine Coast Guard's K9 Handler's Course and their human partners are now faced with the tall order of securing the country's ships and seaports during the Holy Week, a peak travel season.

The dogs, which hold the rank of apprentice seamen and were trained in explosives and narcotics detection, will be deployed to the PCG's 10 districts nationwide after their graduation yesterday.

They will augment the PCG's 50 dogs that sniff for dangerous drugs and materials on ships, in container vans and baggage, said Lt. Commander Roben de Guzman, PCG K9 office commanding officer.

"We have prepared them for the Holy Week because we need more security at the ports then. They had their on-the-job training during the All Saint's Day and Christmas holidays," De Guzman told the INQUIRER.

Of course, where the dogs go so do their human handlers, since the two work as a unit. One dog was assigned to only one handler throughout their training.

Addressing the handlers who graduated as well and their dogs in black K9 uniforms, PCG commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Gosingan said man's best friend was now also his shield against harm, adding that the deployment of more K9 units would boost the fight against terrorism and criminal activity.

"I recognize the gallantry of the K9 teams. They are part of the front line of our defense," he said at the graduation rites at the Manila North Harbor.

The K9 handlers are no slouches as well.

They underwent rigorous training in explosives and ordnance disposal, scuba diving and close-quarters fighting. Their training hours were even more brutal than the dogs', since they started at 5 a.m. and didn't finish until 10 p.m.

Gosingan said that given the nature of a handler's job, they would be given hazard pay. The dogs would be paid in meals and grooming allowances.

To show what they were made of, two dogs and their handlers strutted their stuff before PCG officers and their guests.

Lupin, a black Belgian Malinois, singled out a piece of luggage on the parade ground that contained explosives, sitting beside it to indicate what he had found. His handler, Seaman 1st Class Florentino del Rosario then marked the bag and gave Lupin a rubber ball to play with as a reward.

Arss, a black Labrador, indicated the presence of narcotics inside an old computer hard drive by sitting beside it and scratching it. Arss was also rewarded with a rubber ball that he bounded after, nearly tripping his handler, Seaman 1st Class Janimon Mateo.

Yesterday's graduates belonged to the second batch of dogs and handlers trained by the PCG. The first batch, which graduated in 2004, had only six dogs.

The six-month course is conducted by PCG trainers who had undergone training outside the agency. They are aided by guest lecturers from the K9 divisions of the police, the military and the Presidential Security Group.

Gosingan said that with the PCG conducting its own K9 training, it was able to save millions of pesos since teaching the 19 dogs cost only P500,000. Earlier, the PCG contracted a private firm to train 22 dogs at a cost of P13.8 million.

The Coast Guard did not spend anything to acquire the dogs since they were all donated by PCG officials and private individuals, De Guzman said.

Gosingan himself donated two Labradors, who were part of yesterday's graduating class.

Gosingan said the PCG's K9 group had come a long way after starting with a German Shepherd that could not smell.

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NISSAN

Cops nab jet fuel suspects in Navotas

A MEMBER of the Police Special Action Force escorts a group of men who were caught siphoning liters of aviation fuel from a tanker off Navotas. RAFFY LERMA

By Luige A. del Puerto

POLICE ARRESTED THE 15-MAN CREW OF two boats off the coast of Navotas last Saturday after they were caught redhanded with P250,000 worth of jet fuel allegedly stolen from oil giant Petron.

The police operation was conducted by agents of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group who pretended to be fishermen. Arrested were four crewmen from FB Banoy and 11 others from M/T Dorothy Dos.

Petron has long been complaining to the police about the theft of its products along the Bataan-Manila route. When police inspected FB Banoy, they found a container for fuel below the deck. It held 6,000 liters of Jet A-1 fuel worth P250,000. The fuel was believed to have been taken from M/T Dorothy Dos which was carrying Petron oil products.

Chase

FB Banoy, on the other hand, is not authorized to carry the oil company's fuel, according to Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza, CIDG director. The CIDG arrested the four men on board the FB Banoy after a 20-minute chase. An operative said the banca, its belly full of stolen fuel, was slow, allowing the policemen to catch up with it.

"The oil products are from the refineries. Private contractors carry them to Manila," explained Versoza. "But some are in cahoots with syndicates. While on the shore, on their way here, a banca would simply get beside the boat containing the oil and siphon off the product. In this case, we caught them in the act."

The CIDG is now investigating a barangay official from Navotas believed to be the brains behind the theft, Versoza said.

Number code suspension gets 8 mayors' nod

By Tarra V. Quismundo

EIGHT DOWN, NINE MORE TO GO.

Eight of the 17 Metro mayors have signed the draft resolution approving the suspension of the number-coding scheme this summer, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority said yesterday.

MMDA traffic chief Angelito Vergel de Dios identified the eight as Rosendo Capco of Pateros, Freddie Tinga of Taguig, Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad of Pasay, Sherwin Gatchalian of Valenzuela, Canuto Oreta of Malabon, Feliciano Belmonte of Quezon City, Vicente Eusebio of Pasig, and Marides Fernando of Marikina.

"We are circulating the resolution for the approval of the mayors. Until tomorrow, when we hopefully finish the round of all mayors, we could have the final count of who are in favor and who are not," said Vergel de Dios, executive director of the MMDA Traffic Operations Center.

The draft resolution calls for the suspension this summer of the Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program (UVVRP).

"There are already eight signatures. I guess out of the nine others, there would be mayors favorable to the suspension," said Vergel de Dios.

"The vote would represent the decision of the Metro Manila Council (the agency's policy-making policy), and that's what is going to be implemented. I don't think there's any need to convene anymore if we already get the numbers and see what the majority vote favored," Vergel de Dios said.

The temporary suspension of the number-coding scheme was proposed last week during the meeting of the council. Vergel de Dios earlier said the proposal was based on the results of a study that showed a "30 percent reduction in the number of vehicles on the road during the summer months." The 30 percent drop was above the reduction in vehicular volume resulting from the UVVRP, which is 20 percent, Vergel de Dios added.

He said the program would be implemented until early June, or when the school year officially begins.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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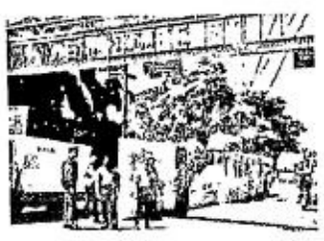
■ Pasay guards in jailbreak relieved /A18

■ BF Homes association gains control of gates /A18



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Woman killed in cell phone snatching incident

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

ROBBERS SHOT DEAD A 27-YEAR-OLD call center employee in Pasig City on Sunday night after she refused to hand over her cellular phone.

Charlene Santos did not reach the hospital alive. Police later identified her through her University of the Philippines (Diliman) student ID. Santos stopped going to UP years ago after she decided to work at the call center, the police said.

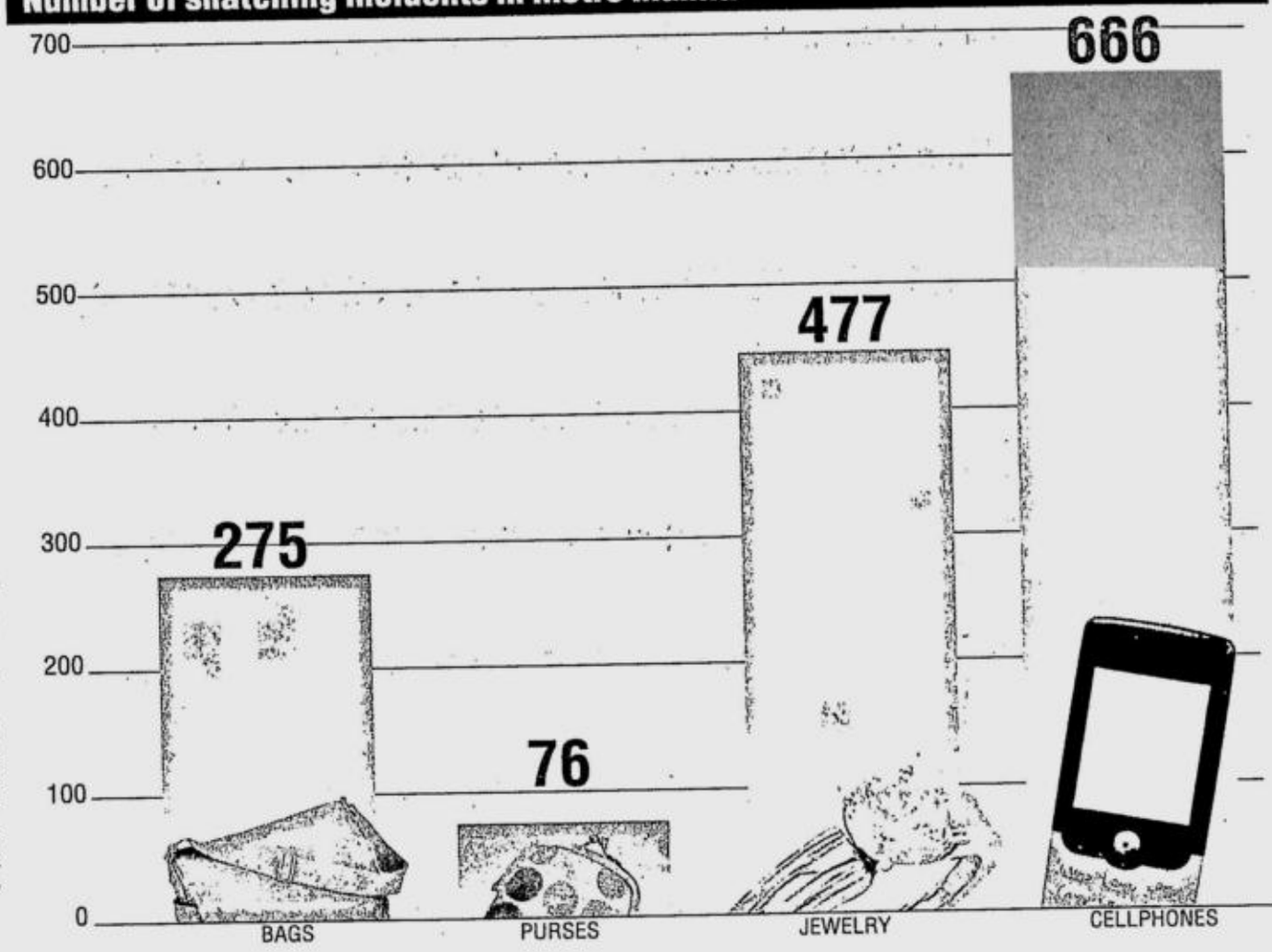
PO3 Roger Baltazar said Santos was on a gray Mitsubishi Adventure FX Taxi at a few minutes past 6 p.m. Sunday. The taxi, which was full of passengers, had come from Cainta, Rizal.

As the taxi approached the Ortigas Bridge in Barangay Rosario, Pasig , two passengers beside Santos pulled out handguns and declared a holdup. With another cohort seated at the back, the two armed robbers started getting the valuables of the passengers. But Santos resisted. She was ready to give her bag but not her cell phone, Baltazar said.

Furious, one of the robbers shot Santos in the head and walked away.

Santos' case was just one in mounting incidents of cell phone robberies in the Metro which resulted in the death of the victim *(See box story)*. In January, 19-year-old Manuel Zachary Escudero, a grandson of a popular resort owner in Quezon, was shot dead by two men who took his cell phone in Manila.

Number of snatching incidents in Metro Manila



Fast Facts

Cell phone theft is the number one street crime in Metro Manila with 666 incidents recorded in 2003, followed by jewelry, bags and purse snatching cases (see chart).

The streets of Pasay City had the most number of cell phone theft/snatching cases in Metro Manila.

Areas in the metropolis with a high incidence of reported cell phone theft/snatching (partial list)

- Corner of Pasay Taft-Pasay Toronda, Pasay City
- Corner of Taft-Libertad
- Corner of Tast-Buendia, Pasay City
- Aurora corner Edsa, Quezon City
- South Super Highway between Magallanes and Pasay Road, Makati City
- Edsa-Guadalupe going to JP Rizal St., Makati City
- Barangay Tambo along MIA Road, Parañaque City
- Baclaran, Parañaque City
- Monumento area, Caloocan City
- Alabang under the bridge area, Muntinlupa City
- Pasig public market, Pasig City
- Ortigas Extension, Barangay Rosario, Pasig City
- Commonwealth Market in front of Kristong Hari, Quezon City
- Talipapa, Quezon City
- MLQ Road near Jollibee, Lower Bicutan, Taguig
- University Belt, Manila

SOURCE: NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION POLICE OFFICE AND PDI RESEARCH
GRAPHICS BY ERNIE SAMBO

Pasay prison guards fired after jailbreak

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE GUARDS WHO WERE ON DUTY Saturday night when 10 inmates escaped from the Pasay City Youth Home were relieved yesterday.

The guards were from the Mustang Security Agency, a private company hired by the city government to oversee security at the jail facility, Delia Camacho, officer-in-charge of the Pasay youth jail, told the INQUIRER.

The two were identified as Mario Tumpalan and Rodrigo Langga. Two other guards who work the day shift at the youth jail will also be replaced as soon as the agency has found replacements for them, she added.

"The agency reached this decision after we had a meeting with them on Sunday afternoon," Camacho said.

Sawed off window bars

Ten male inmates, aged 13 to 17, escaped from the youth jail on Saturday night after sawing off the bars of their cell's window. They crossed to the City Hall of Justice by going thorough the fire exit before jumping into an alley at the back of the jail.

Two of the inmates were later recaptured by Langga who went up to the third floor after he heard a noise at 9:20 p.m. Another one was surrendered by his sister before dawn Sunday. The police are still looking for the remaining seven others.

Saw hidden in bread slices

An investigation showed that one of the inmates' girlfriends was able to sneak in a saw on Friday afternoon, by hiding it in a bag of sliced bread.

"We have been asking the agency to provide their guards with a metal detector but to no avail," Camacho lamented.

In December, four minors escaped from the jail by destroying the fire exit's padlock.

Camacho said she has asked the agency to instruct their guards to be more strict in frisking and inspecting visitors to avoid more jailbreaks in the future.

"On weekends, only the guards keep watch over the jail because my staff goes home. But now, I will be appointing someone to stay overnight," she said.

Homeowners regain control of BF Parañaque gates

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE UNITED BF HOMEOWNERS' ASSOciation Inc. has regained control over the eight gates leading to BF Homes Parañaque on Sunday after the Court of Appeals issued a writ of preliminary injunction last week.

In its decision, the CA ordered the local government and the police to stop enforcing Ordinance 00-15 until its validity has been resolved.

The appellate court noted that the UBFHAI had "sufficiently shown" that the ordinance, which opened to the public two roads inside the subdivision, El Grande and Aguirre Avenues, had worsened the traffic problem in the area.

Higher crime rate

It also caused the proliferation of crimes which placed at risk the residents' homes and property, the court said.

"As owners or administrators of private roads, appellants are entitled to continue to enjoy exclusive access therein for their own protection and security and to regulate its use by non-residents within the limits prescribed by law and administrative rules," it added.

UBFHAI President Celso Reyes welcomed the development and said the court, in effect, had ordered a return to status quo ante. "By status quo ante, it means the gates will be manned again by the association," he told the INQUIRER by phone yesterday.

City gov't to appeal decision

The Paranaque City government, although caught by surprise by the CA's decision, will file a motion for reconsideration within 30 days, said Nelson Lacambra, Mayor Florencio Bernabe's spokesperson.

After a court battle in September last year, the local government gained control of the subdivision's gates after a local court cancelled the writ of preliminary injunction granted to the homeowners' association.

The court's action paved the way for the enforcement of Ordinance No. 00-15, passed by the City Council in 2000, which opened to the public roads in the subdivision that were linked to major city thoroughfares.

"The city hall lawyers are preparing the motion now," Lacambra said.

HANGING OUT
Children enjoy the early days of summer playing in the Metro's public playgrounds, like this one at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City.
RAFFY LERMA

NBI warns drug suspect may be freed on technicality

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A SUSPECTED DRUG TRAFFICKER, who was recently arrested for possession of P53 million worth of ketamine hydrochloride, may be released "because of a technicality."

National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Special Task Force chief Reynaldo Esmeralda said the wife of Indian suspect Harris Abichandi has filed a petition of habeas corpus for his immediate release at the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 55.

Esmeralda explained that the petition was filed because the Department of Justice (DOJ) has not formally charged the suspect since he was subjected to inquest proceedings last Feb. 16.

Esmeralda explained that under rule 113 of the revised rule of court, the prosecutor is given 15 days after the inquest proceedings to complete the preliminary investigation and decide whether or not charges should be filed against the suspect.

"The petition was filed because of the failure on the part of the prosecutor to resolve the case and file the necessary charges within the given period of time," Esmeralda said.

"The resolution of the preliminary investigation is still pending with State Prosecutor Florencio dela Cruz of the DOJ," the NBI official added.

"It is a shame that a big-time drug trafficker should be released because of a mere technicality," Esmeralda said.

The court has directed both parties to submit their answers justifying their positions regarding the petition for habeas corpus within 10 days.

"We are appealing to State Prosecutor Dela Cruz to resolve the preliminary investigation within 10 days so we will not run the risk of being ordered to release a suspect arrested for a non-bailable crime," Esmeralda said.

NBI agents arrested Abichandi, 47, last Feb. 15 at 12 Hamburg St., Merville Subdivision, Paranaque City where 53,304 vials of liquid ketamine hydrochloride were confiscated.

Esmeralda said they conducted the operation after they received a tip from an informant that a large volume of the dangerous drug had arrived from India and passed through the Bureau of Customs.

After confirming that the shipment was delivered to the suspect, NBI STF agents immediately applied for a search warrant and raided Abichandi's house.

Ketamine is a legal drug sold as a sedative for animals or as anesthetic for humans. When used on people, its most common effects are delirium, vivid hallucinations, confusion, violent or aggressive behavior, vertigo, slurred speech, delayed reaction time, euphoria, and amnesia.

Last year, the Dangerous Drugs Board reclassified ketamine as a controlled substance to make unauthorized possession of the drug punishable by law.

Radioman gets axe for crossing Miriam

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

WHEN MIRIAM DEFENSOR-SANTIAGO was still regional trial court judge in Quezon City in the middle 1980s, she told me that if she had her way she would "decriminalize"—her exact word—libel. She said libel went against free press and free speech.

What she told me years ago still rings in my mind. The feisty judge, who would later become immigration commissioner and then senator of the republic, told me that after I came out of a court hearing where I was a respondent in a libel case. Miriam's office was beside that of the judge who was hearing my libel case.

But now that Ms Santiago has become a senator, she seems to have forgotten her promise. Instead, she would punish those who she thought made unflattering remarks about her.

Bong Lapira, well-known broadcaster until a stroke slowed him down several years ago, incurred the senator's wrath when he said something on the airwaves that offended her.

A month and a half ago, while sitting in on the Senate budget committee hearing for the Philippine Broadcasting Service (PBS), Ms Santiago scolded the network's officers for employing Bong.

Santiago took offense at what Lapira said over the government-owned dwBR radio station: "...That while the senator swore before her son's coffin she was quitting politics, she again ran for the Senate and won."

The senator said Lapira "had no business saying this on a government radio station."

Told that Bong, as well as his group of 1950s and 1960s broadcast icons, was not on the government payroll and was doing it for free, the senator said radio disc jockeys should not give commentaries.

(Bong said his broadcast work is therapeutic as he's recovering from a stroke).

Ms Santiago said Lapira should be sacked for his "irreverent comment on the senator."

Gosh, she's worse than Marcos!

* * *

Station manager June Ruiz, and later, PBS Director Dante Cruz, confronted Lapira on his supposed slur on the lady senator. The broadcaster denied he said anything licentious, irreverent or untrue. He said he was prepared to submit audio tapes of the questioned broadcast and transcriptions of program text for a face-up with his accuser and timid government network factotum.

Without a medium to respond to the accusations, Lapira informed PBS he would voluntarily go off the air for the time being until "things cooled down."

After five weeks, Lapira was surprised to find that the government radio network factotum June Ruiz had ordered technicians not to allow Lapira to go on the air "without clearance from upstairs."

Ruiz also sent Lapira a text message that read: "Am sori to tell u bt (but) u cant go back on d air Sunday. Ds is the consensus reached at our Exec Com [executive committee] meeting yesterday. I think u shud clear it wid my superiors. Rili sori."

Question: Who's "upstairs"—Broadcast Media Secretary Cerge Remonde or Palace spokesperson Ignacio Bunye? Have these guys forgotten they were in media before?

* * *

Why should an allegedly inefficient port collector be excluded from the recent revamp at the Bureau of Customs just because he's a member of the Iglesia ni Cristo?

Collector Carlos "Ding" So of the Manila International Container Port (MICP), whose collection, as alleged, had always been way below target, has reportedly invoked his being a member of the powerful religious sect in resisting the revamp.

Collector Lourdes Mangaoang of the Cebu Port, on her part, invokes her connections with Finance Secretary Margarito Teves for disobeying an order reassigning her to the Iloilo Port.

What's between Mangaoang and Teves by the way? Just asking.

France braces for new show of force in jobs row

PARIS—FRENCH STUDENTS called Sunday for a rolling nationwide strike starting with a mass protest Tuesday against a new labor deregulation law that the government has effectively given up on.

After a national coordination meeting at Villeneuve-d'Ascq in northern France, high school and university students called on their followers to stir up protests in private companies, block railroads and highways next Thursday and stage "actions" at criminal courts on Friday against "police repression."

"We reject negotiation," said the students in a communique, that called for the total withdrawal of the law proposed by Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin making it easier to hire and fire workers under the age of 26.

The students also called for a continuation of actions through the Easter vacation of schools and universities.

Meanwhile, more than 2,000 people, including students and their elders, demonstrated in Paris for the right to study and work. Colleges and schools have been disrupted by almost two months of anti-government protests.

President Jacques Chirac signed the new law last week, but immediately went on television to assure the French public that he would water it down through fresh legislation.

Villepin wanted to give bosses the power to fire young workers at any time during their first two years of employment without giving a reason. Chirac said he would reduce the period to one year and require employers to give a reason for any dismissal.

The prime minister said the measure was aimed at making it easier for employers to take on inexperienced workers. Unemployment affects one in four French young people and one in two in some of the riot-hit, high-immigration suburbs.

But critics see the youth contract as the beginning of an attack on French job security.

Sources at the Ministry of Social Cohesion said there were no plans to print any official forms for the contract of first employment, apparently meaning the law is a dead letter unless it includes the modifications called for by Chirac.

Chirac's compromise proposal was judged unconvincing by 62 percent of the public, a CSA poll showed.

The main opposition Socialist Party urged the French to turn out en masse for the day of strikes and demonstrations Tuesday, which will be the fifth in two months. *AFP*

Iran test-fires sonar-evading torpedo

TEHRAN—IRAN HAS TEST-FIRED A SONAR-evading underwater missile that can outpace any enemy warship, a senior naval commander told state television on Sunday during a week of war games in the Gulf.

Western nations have been watching developments in Iran's missile capabilities with concern amid a standoff over the Iranian nuclear program, which the West says is aimed at building atomic bombs. Iran says the program is only civilian.

Analysts say the United States could take military action against Iran if it fails to resolve the nuclear dispute through diplomatic means. Iranian commanders say their armed forces are ready to respond to any attack.

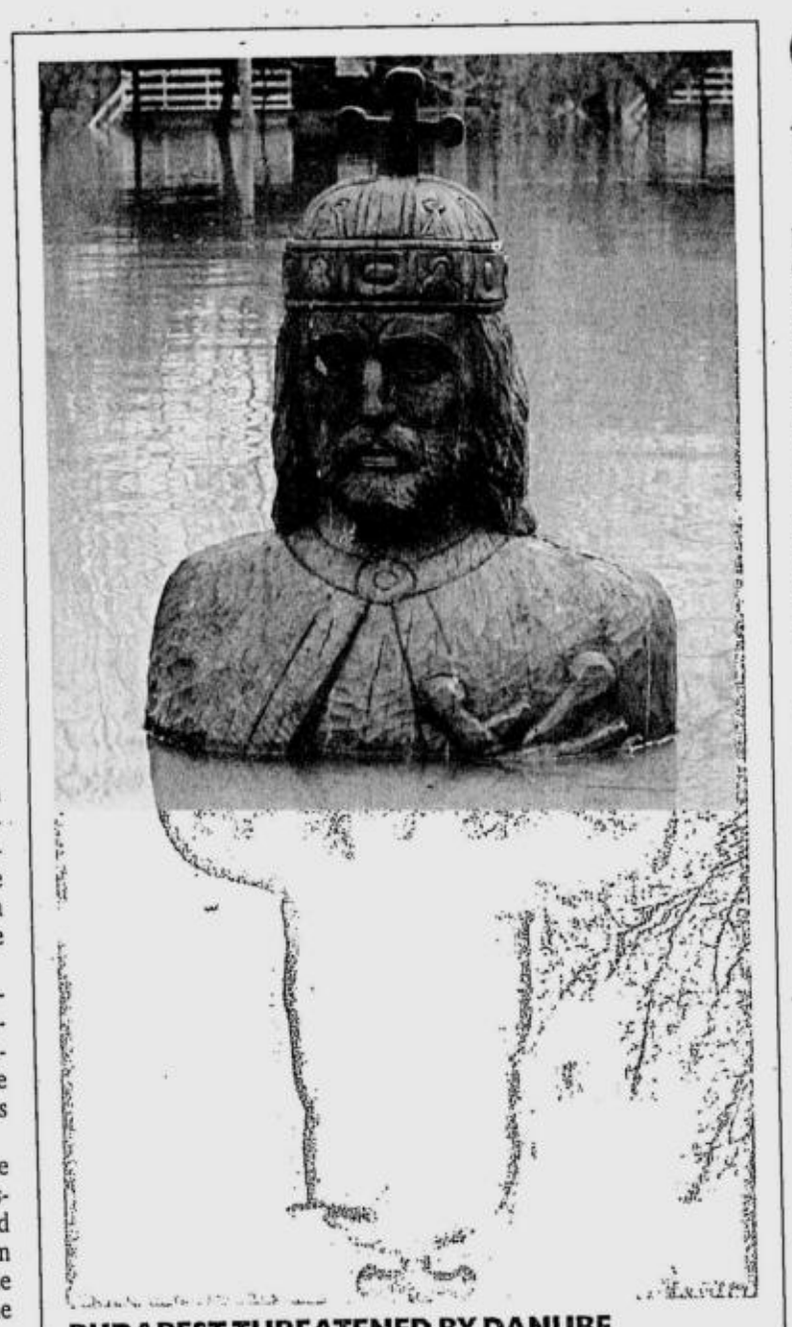
Iran earlier in the war games said it tested a radar-evading missile and Sunday's announcement is likely to add to Western worries. Iran has a commanding position over the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Gulf, a shipping route through which passes some two-fifths of all the oil traded in the world.

"This missile evades sonar technology under the water and even if the enemy sonar system could detect its movement under the water, no warship could escape from it because of its high velocity," Revolutionary Guards Rear Adm. Ali Fadavi said.

"The Islamic Republic is now among the only two countries who hold this kind of missile. Under the water the maximum speed that a missile could (usually) move is 25 m per second, but now we possess a missile which goes as fast as 100 m per second," he told state television.

The commander used the word "missile" in Farsi, rather than "torpedo."

"The boats that can launch this missile have a technology that makes them stealthy and nobody could recognize them or act against them," he added. *Reuters*



BUDAPEST THREATENED BY DANUBE
A sculpture of Hungary's first King Stephen I is seen submerged in water in Pap island, near Budapest April 2, as flooding of the Danube river nears its peak. Hungary's prime minister rushed from a Socialist rally on Saturday to fill sandbags to defend Budapest from the Danube. REUTERS

China, Vatican may reestablish ties by Olympics, says cardinal

HONG KONG—CHINA AND THE VATICAN could reestablish diplomatic relations by the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Cardinal Joseph Zen, the most senior Roman Catholic clergyman in the country, said on Monday.

Ties were cut in 1951 and the Vatican has formal relations with Taiwan, the self-ruled island that Beijing considers a breakaway province.

But momentum has been building in recent years for the Vatican to make the switch from Taiwan to China. As a precondition, Beijing insists that the Holy See sever diplomatic links with Taiwan and refrain from meddling in China's internal affairs.

China and the Vatican could have diplomatic relations "as early as the Olympic Games," Zen said. "I think it's a very reasonable target. The process may be long and it may be short. It depends on how they (China's leaders) open their way of seeing things."

Zen, who does not play a formal role in the talks with Beijing but has taken an active interest in Sino-Vatican affairs, has said the Vatican was prepared to make such a move.

A sticking point has been that Beijing refuses to allow the Vatican to name Chinese bishops unilaterally, which is the usual procedure. Zen said the Pope could give some ground on the issue. *Reuters*

Experts: Poor countries can save lives by investing smartly in health

BEIJING—EVEN THE POOREST COUNTRIES in the world can improve their overall health by taking simple, inexpensive steps such as providing aspirin to help cut down on heart disease and stroke—the biggest single killer in developing countries, health experts said Monday.

Three books were released at the start of a four-day global conf erence outlining the best and worst buys that help or hinder the goal of saving lives from medical issues ranging from cancer and HIV/AIDS to traffic accidents.

"Many of our ministers think of health systems as a bottomless pit that cannot be addressed," said George Alleyne, director emeritus of the Pan American Health Organization and an editor for the Disease Control Priorities Project. "You do not have to be rich to improve your health, that is an essential message of this book."

He said countries can save large amounts of money simply by using the data collected for what works and what doesn't—for example, avoiding costly surgery for people with epilepsy and instead providing pills that cost pennies apiece.

Dr. Shigeru Omi, the World Health Organization's regional director for the Western Pacific, said the region is saddled with a huge health burden that varies greatly among countries. Japan has a life expectancy of 82 years, compared to Papua New Guinea where it's only 53.

"In the 37 countries and areas that make up our region, 11,000 people die every day due to cardiovascular disease and another 6,500 people die as the result of cancer," he said in a video presentation broadcast at the conference's opening. "More than 1 million cases of tuberculosis are diagnosed annually in the region every year. Newly emerging infectious diseases, first SARS and now avian influenza, demand that we strengthen our ability to detect and respond to outbreaks at the grass-roots level." *AP*

China, Taiwan 'check diplomacy' fueling Pacific corruption, says report

WELLINGTON—CHINESE PREMIER Wen Jiabao arrives in Fiji on Tuesday hoping to increase Beijing's ties in the South Pacific, but a report warns rivalry between China and Taiwan in the island nations was causing corruption.

A recent Australian Senate committee report on China says competition for diplomatic recognition between Beijing and Taipei among the region's 12 island states could hurt political stability and economic development in the South Pacific.

"China and Taiwan have added to corruption in the Pacific by competing for recognition," Susan Windybank from Australian think-tank the Center for Independent Studies said in the report.

Windybank described the rivalry as a "Pacific Cold War," with both nations using "cheque book diplomacy" which was fueling endemic corruption in the region.

China has a strong presence in the South Pacific being officially recognized by seven nations—Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, the Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Micronesia and Tonga.

Taiwan has diplomatic relations with six nations—Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

But over the years some small, poor island states, such as Kiribati, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, have switched back and forth between the two, seeking to gain the best aid package.

The Pacific's island states offer very little economically to both China and Taiwan, but as a bloc their support is sought in international forums, like the United Nations.

Wen will attend the inaugural China-Pacific Islands Countries Economic Development & Cooperation Forum in Fiji on Wednesday, which is expected to attract six South Pacific prime ministers.

Fiji and China are expected to sign agreements to promote cooperation in transport infrastructure and civil aviation.

China has a growing business presence in the Pacific. There are more than 3,000 Chinese state-owned and private enterprises, from mining ventures to restaurants and grocery stores, investing about A$800 million ($214 million) in the region.

The Australian report said China and Taiwan use their Pacific aid as a "blunt foreign policy tool" to gain recognition.

"Competition between the RPC (People's Republic of China) and Taiwan for diplomatic recognition has, on occasion, appeared to take on the characteristics of a bidding war," it said.

The Senate committee called on China to ensure its aid, estimated at up to A$300 million annually, to be unconditional.

"Even though China's diplomatic and financial support for these small island countries appears to be unconditional, there is a requirement to adhere to the one-China policy," it said. *Reuters*

UK wars on crime with new 'FBI' unit

LONDON—A NEW British national crime-fighting unit modeled on the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will be launched by the government on Monday with the aim of taking on major criminal gangs.

The Serious Organised Crime Agency (Soca), which will have a staff of around 5,000, will tackle drug traffickers, people smugglers, global pedophile networks and sophisticated fraudsters.

Prime Minister Tony Blair, who will officially launch the unit later on Monday, said the time had come to make life "hell" for those who were behind organised crime.

"This is not crime in the 1950s or crime even in the 1980s, this is 21st century organised crime: People trafficking, organized drug gangs, heavy types of fraud," he told Sky News.

"If we're going to hit them hard, we're going to need new powers and a new organization to do that."

Asked what his message to crime bosses was, Blair said:

"This is an agency that has got the powers and the organization that is going to make life hell for you, whilst you make life hell for other people." *Reuters*

2006 The CATHOLIC MASS MEDIA AWARDS is on!!!

Who can nominate? Entries may be submitted by any person or organization wishing to direct the attention of the CMMA to a meritorious program, series, article, material & the like. A person or a company may submit more than one entry in each category. Entries need not be Christian and nominees need not be Catholics.

CATEGORIES

ADVERTISING
Best Outdoor Ad - Branded
Best Outdoor Ad - Public Service
Best Print Ad - Branded
Best Print Ad - Public Service
Best Radio Ad - Branded
Best Radio Ad - Public Service
Best TV Ad - Branded
Best TV Ad - Public Service

TELEVISION
Best Adult Educational/Cultural Program
Best Business News or Feature
Best Children's Program
Best Comedy Program
Best Drama Series/Program
Best Entertainment Program
Best News Magazine
Best News Program
Best Public Service Program
Best Special Event Coverage
Best Sports Show
Best Talk Show

PRINT
Best Business Column
Best Children's Magazine
Best Comic Strip
Best Editorial Cartoon
Best Entertainment Column
Best Investigative Report
Best Local Community/ Parish Newspaper
Best News Coverage
Best News Photograph
Best Opinion Column
Best Sports Column
Best Youth Magazine

MUSIC
Best Album - Secular
Best Album - Religious
Best Music Video

INTERNET
Best Website

CINEMA
Best Picture

RADIO (AM or FM)
Best Business News or Feature
Best Counseling & Public Service Program
Best Drama Program (Episodic or Serial)
Best Educational Program
Best Entertainment Program
Best News Commentary
Best News Program
Best Sports Program

STUDENT
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Best TV Production (documentary or narrative)
Best Short Film (documentary or narrative)
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SERVIAM AWARD
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CRITERIA FOR JUDGING
Love for God
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Awards Night - October 21, 2006

Deadline for submission of entries: May 17, 2006 (Wednesday) 5 p.m.

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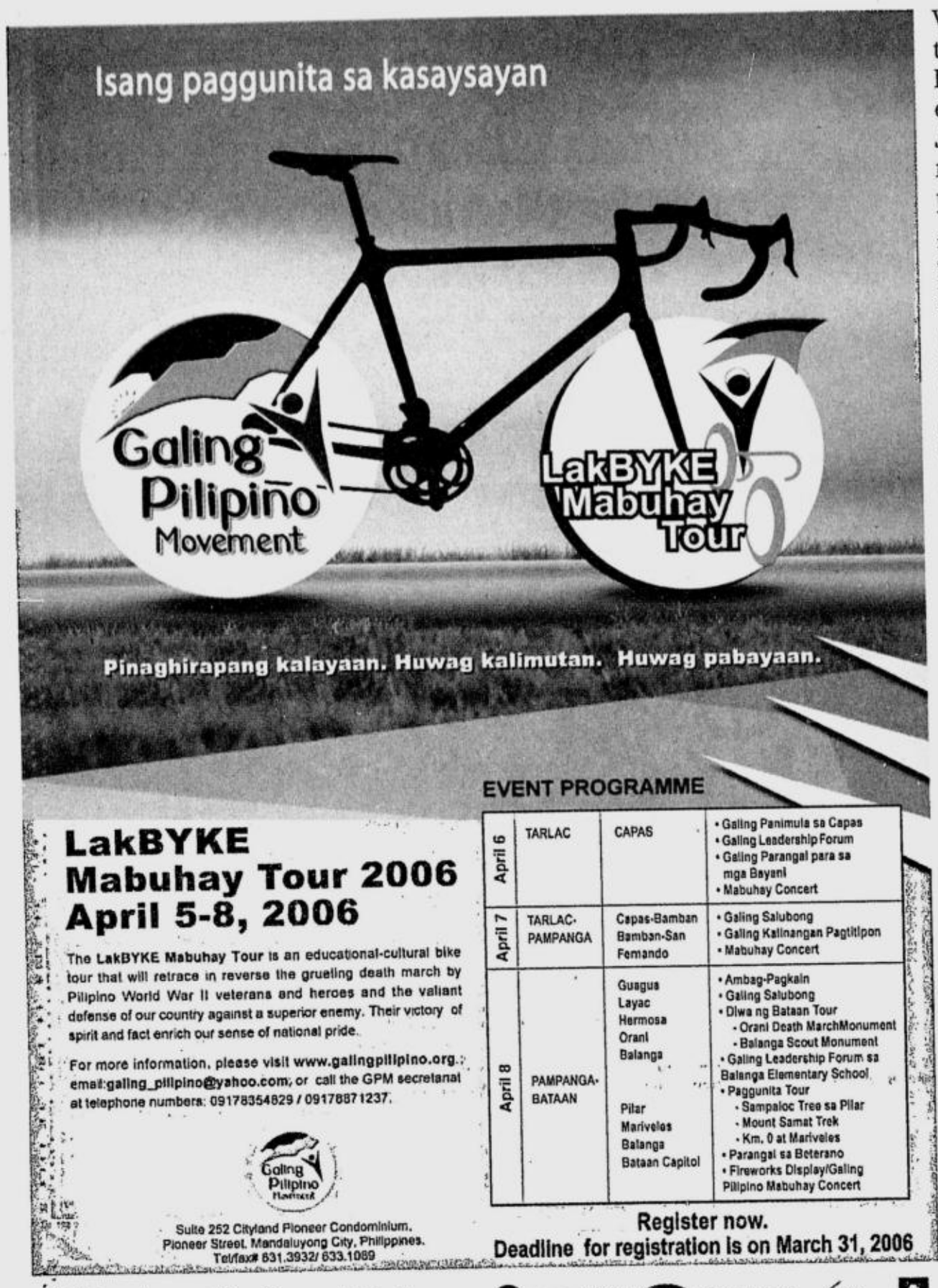
The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Pope: John Paul helping us from heaven



VATICAN CITY—BEFORE A thronged St. Peter's Square, Pope Benedict XVI marked Sunday the exact moment of his predecessor John Paul II's death a year ago by reciting a special prayer at 9:37 p.m. (3:37 a.m. in Manila).

"He continues to be present in our minds and in our hearts," Benedict said, reflecting on the life of the late pope from the window of his apartment, where John Paul II died on April 2, 2005 after a 26-year pontificate.

"One year has passed since the death of our beloved John Paul II, which happened at this precise moment, 9:37 p.m., but his memory continues to be more alive than ever," he said.

Some 80,000 pilgrims were massed in the square clutching lighted candles for the prayer service, a moving tribute to the lasting appeal of the late pope held under the glow of a crescent moon.

"The entire city of Rome has gathered symbolically for this moving moment of reflection and prayer," said Benedict.

Benedict said John Paul II, who suffered from crippling Parkinson's disease, faced his long illness "with courage—which made everyone more aware of human pain, physical or spiritual."

"John Paul II is helping us from heaven to follow our path, remaining docile disciples of Jesus to be, like he himself liked to tell young people, 'sentinels of the dawn' at the beginning of this third Christian millennium."

In a leaf taken from his famous polyglot predecessor, the German Pope greeted Poles—watching by a special live television link from John Paul II's home cathedral of Krakow—in their own language.

"The memory of John Paul II is alive in us and the feeling of his spiritual presence will never fade," he said in Polish. Repeating his predecessor's words, he told them: "Remain strong in the faith."

Leading the commemoration in Krakow was the late pope's faithful private secretary, now cardinal, Stanislaw Dziwisz.

"Thank you, thank you, Holy Father," responded Dziwisz, his message broadcast on big screens erected around the Vatican square.

"John Paul II is smiling down at us from heaven," he said.

Many of the pilgrims packed inside the Vatican square were moved to tears by the ceremony.

"We were here at this moment a year ago, and now we are reliving the whole thing all over again," said Grazyna Szemraj, 46, one of thousands of Polish pilgrims in Rome for the event.

Many held up the red and white flag of the late pontiff's native Poland and chatted happily ahead of Benedict's appearance. Many others stood in silent reflection.

POLISH priests attend a Mass commemorating the first death anniversary of Pope John Paul II in Warsaw April 2. AFP

"I feel a little sad. He was such a great man, for all the things he did in his life, for his suffering," said 54-year-old Mauro Pallazzoli through tear-filled eyes.

Alicia Zapawa, a Polish woman living in Rome, said commemorating the pope's passing was "an important moment for the whole world."

Behind her, a group from Poland held up a giant banner proclaiming "John Paul the Great, Make him a Saint Now."

"I hope he will be a saint soon," chimed in Kang In Chul, a 24-year old student from Seoul, South Korea.

Jean Mrozek, 58, said he felt particularly emotional because he was in the Vatican square on Oct. 16, 1978 for the announcement of his fellow Pole Karol Wojtyla's election as pope.

"I cried so much back then. For sheer joy. I live here behind the Vatican so we practically lived together for 27 years, John Paul II and I," he said.

"I pray for him and I'm sure he's looking down on us from heaven, watching over us." *AFP*

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

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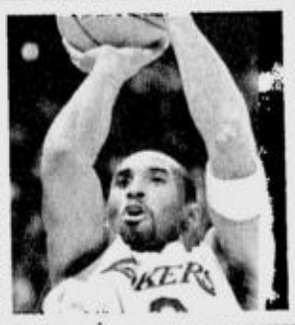
SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Text us your feedback: inquirer sprt name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

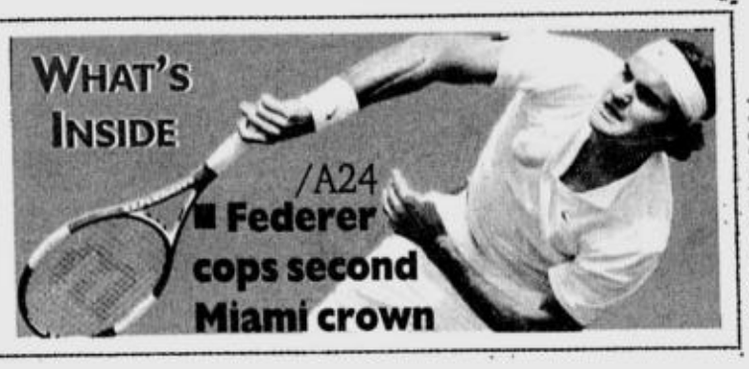
■ Ilustre sisters lead strong Dapitan surge /A22

■ Paragua untouchable, nails 4th straight title /A22



■ Lhuillier Cebu blasts Iloilo /A23

■ Pistons win, clinch home court advantage /A24



Caguioa, H'tiveros best of the week

By Musong R. Castillo

MARK CAGUIOA AND DONDON Hontiveros have emerged from mild scoring slumps to propel their respective sides to the top of the Gran Matador Brandy-PBA Philippine Cup.

And it is but fitting that they share the award as the league's best player last week.

Caguioa averaged 23 points in the last two games for Barangay Ginebra, while Hontiveros was again at his best for the San Miguel Beermen, who have won their last three games and are now in the solo lead.

Hontiveros took a long time warming up—almost three weeks into the tournament to be exact—but when he did, he took San Miguel along for a great ride.

Six of 10 treys

Averaging just over six points in the first five games for the Beermen, Hontiveros shot 24 points in each of the last two San Miguel victories, capped by a 94-90 win over hardluck Talk 'N Text. He shot 6-of-10 from beyond "trifectaville" Sunday night.

The Beermen improved to 5-2 and are a game clear of the 4-3 Kings, who were below .500 when Caguioa rediscovered his offensive touch.

The league's leading scorer, Caguioa hit 25 points on an 11-of-20 clip in a 91-88 overtime victory over Alaska. He also had nine rebounds and three assists.

Those points were what kept the Kings in the thick of the fight, before Sunday Salvacion, who found himself open after the Aces clamped down on Caguioa, flicked in the game-winning triple with eight-tenths of a second left last Sunday.

End of losing streak

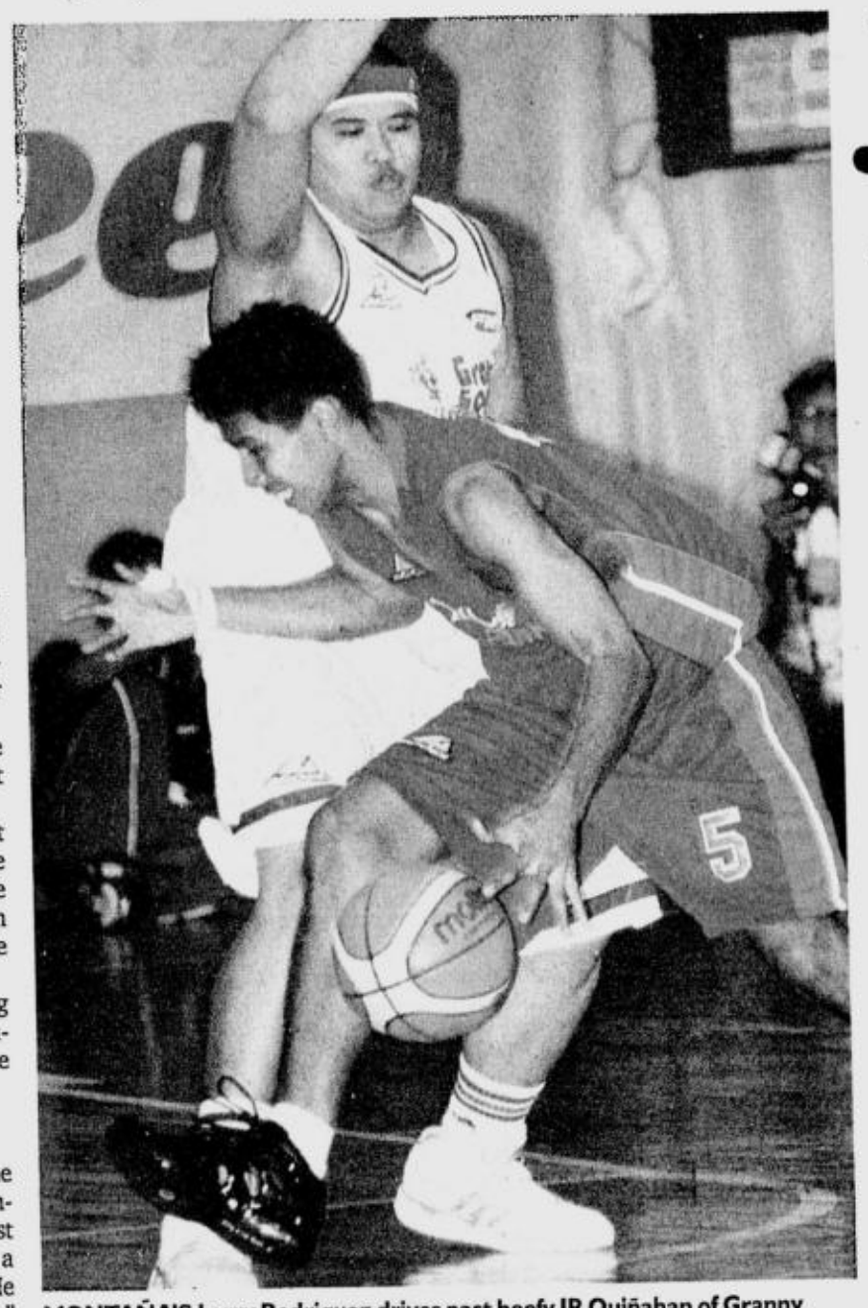
In an 84-81 win over Coca-Cola last Friday, Caguioa had 21 points, eight rebounds and four assists as the Kings snapped a three-game losing streak.

The PBA Press Corps handed out the awards to the two shooting guards, naming them co-winners over San Miguel's Danny Seigle and Danny Ildefonso and the back-to-form Eric Menk of the Gin Kings.

All four San Miguel Corp. teams occupy the top spots in the tournament.

Purefoods sees action tomorrow opposite the Air21 Express at the Araneta Coliseum in a bid to rejoin the Beermen at the top.

Hontiveros' streak will be tested on Friday night when the Beermen slug it out with the Chunkee Giants at the Ynares Center in Antipolo.



MONTAÑA'S Larry Rodriguez drives past beefy JR Quiñahan of Granny Goose in a recent game. The Jewels are expected to turn to their reliable veterans again against Rain or Shine today. RYAN LIM

Jewels clash with Painters for solo lead

BOTH COACHES TOTE clean slates. They are confident of their respective rosters. They are raring to do battle.

Still unscathed in three games, the Montaña Jewels and the Rain or Shine Elasto Painters clash for the solo lead in the PBL Unity Cup at 2 p.m. today at the FEU Gym.

Coach Leo Austria said his dominant frontline keyed Rain or Shine's early winning streak, while mentor Nel Parado credited the leadership of the Montaña veterans.

The Toyota Otis Sparks will also vie for a piece of second spot when they battle the unpredictable expansion crew TeleTech Titans at 4 p.m.

The consistent plays of big men Marvin Ortiguerra, Junjun Cabatu, 6-foot-7 Jay-R Reyes and new 6-foot-10 recruit Samigue Eman have powered the Painters' strong start.

"I'm sure that any team they go, they'll be among the key players," said Austria. "I have many frontliners, so they have to show their worth. It's a healthy competition. Every time they go inside the court, they perform."

Parado, in only his third week as Jewels head coach, has been relying on his veterans led by Al Magpayo and Alex Compton.

"Our first win gave us the confidence," said Parado, who replaced Robert Sison. "We al-

JEWELS/ A22

Lim collapses after stress test, stays in hospital

By Jasmine W. Payo

BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES secretary general Graham Lim will remain under observation after collapsing yesterday morning at the the Metropolitan Hospital in Tondo, Manila.

"I took the treadmill test, then I passed out after about 14 minutes," said Lim. "My blood pressure was low. It's still due to stress."

A week after his arrest and detention at the Bureau of Immigration cell in Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig, Lim was rushed to the hospital on Friday night due to high blood pressure and chest pains.

Last Thursday, Lim was recommended for confinement after a medical checkup at the BI office in Intramuros, Manila, showed he had an irregular heartbeat.

"We already wrote the Bureau of Immigration that, based on the recommendation of my doctor, I need further checkups for another two to three days," said Lim.

Immigration agents arrested him last March 24 on an earlier BI ruling that he was a citizen of the Republic of China (Taiwan). The 49-year-old Lim was not released even after the Court of Appeals issued a temporary restraining order on his deportation.

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Name of Project : Graphic Design Requirements
Brief Description : Design & Creative rendition - services cover conceptualization, design execution, compre/final artwork preparation, photography, photo direction and printing supervision of LANDBANK major collaterals
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) : P 7,015,250.00
Source of Funding : LBP Funds
Contract Duration : Calendar Year 2006 -2008

Eligibility of prospective bidders shall be checked using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. The evaluation procedure to be adopted shall be Quality Cost Based Evaluation (QCBE). Bids whose technical proposals pass the minimum technical hurdle score of **70** shall have its financial proposal opened and evaluated. The technical proposal shall carry **85%** weight in the bid evaluation while the remaining 15% shall be based on the financial proposal.

Bidding for the above requirements is scheduled on **April 17, 2006 at 1:00PM** and pertinent Bid Documents may be obtained from the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar Street corner Dr. Quintos Street, Malate, Manila **upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00**

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the **Pre-Bid Conference** scheduled on **April 5, 2006, 10:00 AM** at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its implmenting Rules and Regulation (IRR).

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare the bidding a failure or waive any required formality therein and make an award to the bidder whose bid is the most advantageous to the Bank.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI–March 28 & April 4, 2006)

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Paragua untouchable, nails 4th straight title

PARAGUA: After a tiebreak

WINNING LOCAL TOURNAMENTS HAS become a habit for Grandmaster Mark Paragua.

Paragua topped the second edition of the Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. Men's Invitational Tune-Up Matches at the Syncopados Music Bar in Mabini, Malate, over the weekend to claim his fourth straight title.

The 22-year-old Paragua, the country's top player with an Elo rating of 2617, scored 5.5 points in seven matches, the same output of National Master Oliver Barbosa, International Master Ronald Dableo and 12-year-old Fide Master Wesley So.

Paragua, however, emerged champion after the Bucholz tie breaker was applied. He garnered 33.5 tiebreak points compared with Barbosa's 29.5, Dableo's 29.0, and So's 28.0.

The four split the combined prizes for the top four finishers, worth P20,000, in the event bankrolled by the president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines and congressman from Surigao del Sur.

The newly married Paragua had already topped the 5th La Union Open in San Fernando City, La Union, the 2006 Candon City Open in Ilocos Sur, and the first edition of this event at the same venue last week.

Actually, the Palm/ Hiarcs 9.6 software of Reginald Tee and Dari Castro bested Paragua in the seventh and final round to finish with the best score of 6.0 points. But the results of the PDA Palm Hiarcs had no bearing since it was only a "guest participant."

Paragua is scheduled to hold a 50-board simultaneous exhibition on April 7 at the Baguio Country Club. The event is being organized by former Benguet governor and newly elected NCFP director Raul Molintas.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

HOMEGROWN CUP

San Beda All-Stars catch idle La Salle

GAMES SATURDAY
(San Juan Gym)
1 p.m.—Ateneo vs. La Salle (High School/All-Stars)

UNBEATEN SAN BEda All-Stars kept up with idle pacesetter La Salle by posting its second straight win in the Total-Filoil-Flying V Homegrown Cup at the San Juan gym.

The Red Lions led from start to finish to turn back the University of the Philippines Fighting Maroons, 85-70.

In the other alumni game, the Letran Knights of coach Itoy Esguerra continued their steady comeback, stunning powerhouse Far Eastern University Tamaraws, 73-68.

In high school action, San Beda crushed UP Integrated School, 100-45, behind the 17 points of Garvo Lanete, while Letran turned back FEU, 75-68, in the tournament sponsored by Globe and Shell and supported by Sunbolt, Immuvit, Accel, Inihaw Circle, Bank of Commerce, Banco de Oro, PBCom, Gerry's Grill, Solar Sports, X-24, Security Bank and Millennium Plans.

The scores:

First Game

SAN BEDA 85—Reroma 23, Manucat 20, Reyes 18, Oliveros 9, Recid 6, Guzman 4 , Largo 3, Rivera J. 2, Lucas 0, Malong 0, Martin 0, Navarro 0, Mariano 0, Rivera R. 0, Cristobal 0.

UP 70—Marata 20, Arandia 14, Ferrer 11, Yu 7, Celis 6, Cruz 5, Javier 2, Mendoza 2, Salva 2, Madrid , Dandan 0.

Quarters: 24-19; 48-35; 68-49; 85-70

Second Game

LETRAN 73—Lim 14, Garcia Ma. 10, Garcia Mi. 9, Velez 8, Moody 7, Latonio 6, Ramos 6, Gonzales 4, Pinat 3, Chua 2, Prior 2, Silliona 2.

FAR EASTERN 68—Padaong 21, De Guzman 19, Valenzona 10, Postanes 6, Valle 5, Gaspar 4, Codinera 2, Pasco 1.

Quarters: 16-17; 36-38; 54-51; 73-68

FILIPINO Andres Cristiano rises to head a ball during a match between Chinese Taipei and the Philippines in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Challenge Cup at The M.A.Aziz Stadium in Chittagong on Saturday. Chinese Taipei won, 1-0. AFP

Ilustre sisters lead strong Dapitan surge

By Marc Anthony Reyes

SISTERS INGRID AND BIANCA ILUSTRE captured six gold medals between themselves, boosting Dapitan to the top of the medal tally in the fifth Manila Youth Games that opened yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Aquatics Center.

Ingrid had three individual golds and Bianca two, as Dapitan pocketed 10 gold medals to lead Jose Abad Santos and Manila Seahawks, which won nine and eight golds, respectively, in the early overall race.

Ingrid stamped her class in the 10-under girls' division with victories in the 200-meter IM, 200-meter free and 50-meter breaststroke events, while Bianca triumphed in the 200 free and 100 breast of the 11-12 division.

The Ilustre siblings then teamed up with 15-year-old Shawn Arquiza and 12-year-old Jodie de Leon to rule the 200-meter medley relay in the 9-and-over division for girls.

First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo and Ali Atienza, president of the organizing Manila Sports Council, opened the event.

"We are very honored and thankful to the First Gentleman for sharing his precious time in gracing the MY Games Opening," said Atienza.

Ma. Christina Onofre dominated gymnastics with gold medal performances in the balanced beam, floor exercise, horse vault and individual all-around to bolster AC Herrera High School into the middle of the pack with a total haul of six-gold, three-silver and two-bronze medals.

But Onofre did not get the needed help in the team competition for girls 12-and-under as AC Herrera finished out of the medal in fifth spot.

The gymnastics finals resume today, along with the boys' and girls' football, while action also continues in badminton, baseball and table tennis at the RMSC.

The volleyball competition will be held at the San Andres Sports and Civic Center.

Swimming events will resume Thursday at the Emilio Aguinaldo College on Taft Avenue, where all eyes will be on the Manila Seahawks who are gunning to win the swimming championship for the second straight year.

Jewels clash with Painters . . .

From page A21

ways come well-prepared, but we're lucky to have the leadership of our veterans like Alex."

Rain or Shine easily demolished Hapee-PCU, 66-48, for their third straight win last Saturday. Montaña kept pace with the defending champions by turning back Magnolia, 68-60, the next day.

Toyota Otis will shoot for a second straight win after a tough 76-74 victory against Harbour Centre. In that game, Jonathan Aldave stepped up for the Sparks, scoring eight of his 16 points in the final period.

"We committed 30 errors but we still managed to pull through," said Sparks coach Louie Alas. "It was an ugly win, but we were able to put the ball where we wanted."

TeleTech, too, pulled off a surprise 78-63 win over Granny Goose last Sunday.

"If we could come up with the same intensity and cohesion, then we have good chances of scoring another win," said rookie mentor Jerry Codiñera. "As I said before, we can't rely on one player, what we need is another concerted effort."

The league newcomers impressively overcame an 18-point deficit behind Ariel Capus , who scored 11 of his 20 points in the pivotal third quarter.

The Titans also got a big lift from the hustle and scoring of rookie Ronnie Bughao, Mel Latoreno and Nino Gelig. Jasmine W. Payo

STANDINGS	W	L
R.or Shine	3	0
Montana	3	0
Toyota Otis	2	1
Hapee-PCU	1	2
G. Goose	1	2
Magnolia	1	2
TeleTech	1	2
Harbour	0	3

GAMES TODAY (*FEU Gym*)
2 p.m.—Montaña vs Rain or Shine
4 p.m.—Toyota Otis vs TeleTech

Ticket to ride

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

WILL LUCIO TAN PAY P50,000 TO WATCH Manny Pacquiao fight Oscar Larios on July 2 at the Araneta Coliseum?

My answer is no.

While it's true that the Kapitan is now listed in Forbes Magazine as among the world's wealthiest persons, he'll not be that stupid as to sit at ringside for the next Pacquiao fight to prove that he is, indeed, that rich.

OK, without a doubt, fifty thousand bucks for the Kapitan is a mere drop in the bucket. Bird feed.

To the wealthy, though, it is not all money. Dignity they value that much, too. Money commands power, but never respect.

Where is dignity in shelling out P50,000 just to watch Pacquiao probably floor Larios faster than Wyatt Erap gulps down his favorite drink?

Will the Kapitan's P50,000 seat earn him respect, *pogi* points, from the people?

Seething anger he might yet incur. He might get himself pelted with eggs and tomatoes coming from the bleachers.

There is poverty all over. Sixty-five percent of our population is hungry. Squalor assaults the national landscape endlessly, senselessly. Nearly five million are now without jobs.

How many mouths can P50,000 feed in just a single day?

Thousands, I tell you.

Even if I earn close to a hundred thousand bucks a month (I tell you the INQUIRER pays that well, ahem), I won't part with my P50,000 just to be at ringside. I'd rather that I watch it on TV, ice-cold beer in hand while seated on my rocking chair munching cashew nuts.

Oh, well, in contrast, the Kapitan can easily afford to toss in that P50,000 as much as he can easily afford building million-peso school houses nationwide, which he does in monotonous regularity but without fanfare.

But will the Kapitan do it just because Pacquiao, short of being declared a national hero by GMA, is finally fighting on home ground? The thrill of seeing him, finally, in the flesh will be commensurate to the cost of a ringside seat? A perfect ticket to ride as The Beatles sang it?

I doubt it very much if the Kapitan, who I heard even hates going first class each time he boards a PAL jet that he owns, can stomach that. It's not within his province. Ask Henry So Uy, a trusted lieutenant of the Kapitan at PAL.

Now if promoters of the fight, who I must warmly commend for their boldness in presenting a money-intensive show, will ask the Kapitan for a donation—a sponsorship package, perhaps—I think the PAL owner will not think twice acceding to it. It could be that no less that a hundred ringside tickets might accrue to his benevolence. A jackpot it would be for our fight promoters.

Now, will he use one of the tickets?

Again, I doubt it.

The truly wealthy have a way with life that sets them apart from us, ordinary mortals. They are usually meek, shy, if not reclusive as in the case of Hughes.

And now for the general admission price of P1,000, will you and I go for it?

I won't. Even if peddled at P500, as Pacquiao had reportedly batted for, it would still be expensive and unaffordable to Mr. Every Day People.

I remember that in one of Luisito Espinosa's fights—was that in 1997 at the Luneta, in a world title fight against Manuel Medina of Mexico, under FVR's reign?—it was staged for free.

Now if GMA can reprise that, think about its impact on the people. More than a *pogi* point for an administration saddled with Triple C—corruption, credibility and coups.

Hey, I hope I'm not dreaming?

* * *

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

SPORTSWATCH

PC-INP retired officers' ladies golf set

A GOLF TOURNAMENT HOSTED BY THE PC-PNP RETIRED OFFICERS' LADIES Association Inc. tees off at 6 a.m. on April. 26 at the Aguinaldo Golf Club in Quezon City. The event, "Swing and Putt for a Cause," is a fund-raiser sponsored by the association for the benefit of the dependents of retired PC-PNP personnel, especially the widows and orphaned children of those who died in the service. A Toyota Vios will be up for grabs as a hole-in-one prize. Merchandise prizes will also be raffled off during the awards rites. The tournament's chief organizers are Dolores U. Nazareno and Marinette Y. Aglipay, co-chairs of the way and means committee, and president Solita D. Tan-Gatue. For inquiries, call Reggie at 725-0874.

Milo BEST listing deadline today

BOYS AND GIRLS WHO ARE INTO BASKETBALL HAVE ONLY UNTIL TODAY TO enroll in the Milo BEST Center's summer program every Tuesday and Sunday at Xavier School and Nestle Alabang. Level 1 classes are scheduled at Xavier from 1 to 4 p.m. while level 2 sessions (9-11 years old) for levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 are billed at Nestle Alabang also in the afternoon. Morning classes are already fully booked.

NCA derby under way at RMC

ANOTHER 7-COCK DERBY WILL BE PRESENTED TONIGHT BY THE NATIONAL Cockers Association (NCA) at the Roligon Mega Cockpit with 55 fights on tap. NCA president Ito Ynares said the group's derbies would now be held every Tuesday and Thursday. Tonight's hosts are Boy Velez, Johnny Jalandoni, Boy Jiao and Amboy Manlapaz. Last week's solo winner Red Creek I, the entry of Rep. Iggy Arroyo and Jesry Palmares, leads the cast of entries that includes Binangonan Balbina, VGB, Mulawin AA, Joe Firefly 13 and 14, Spartan Pichay, Wild Wing Sundance, Jade Resort and Jimafer.For inquiries, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812.

Weight submission on for LCC cockfest

OFFICIAL ENTRIES TO THE "LCC DAVAO 5-COCK DERBY" MUST BE SUBMITted today at the San Juan Coliseum from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Participants may call 0917-8264018, 725-6563 or 725-5369 for inquiries. To be hosted by Dori Du of Davao and Louie Cua of the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines, the one-day battle of big-time cockers will start at 2 p.m. tomorrow. As of yesterday, 50 participants have registered for the derby sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. A total of 125 fights have been rostered.

80 bullstag fights sizzle at Big Dome

THE THIRD LEG CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE PHILIPPINE HERITAGE CUP 5-BULLstag derby series will be disputed today and on Thursday at the Araneta Coliseum with Gran Matador and B-Meg Derby Ace as sponsors. The first of more than 80 fights start at 3 p.m. At stake is a cash pot of P600,000. Entry fee is P10,000. Sharing the title in the second leg held March 21 and 23 were Raffy Campos, Henry Tan, Joey Rebadavia, Nelson Uy, Billy Abne, Alwyn Sy, Romero Yu, Tony Galang and William Chia. The first-leg joint winners were John Reyes and Danny Halili, Raffy Campos and Edwin Aranez, Tony Oppen, Raul Adan, Anthony Lim, Buddy Robregado, Baggay Brothers and Nono San Pablo. For inquiries, call 911-3101.

Tagaytay five seeks 2nd win vs Iligan

TAGAYTAY CITY—EXPANSION TEAM Batang Tagaytay guns for its second northern division victory against Iligan today in the main game of another Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship doubleheader at the Convention Center here.

The Tagaytay cagers of NBC vice president and Mayor Bambol Tolentino expect rough sailing from Mayor Lawrence Cruz's Crusaders in the 4 p.m. contest.

The North Cotabato Braves of Gov. Manny Piñol also face tough opposition when they collide with the Bacchus/Harbour Centre-Manila squad earlier at 2.

The Braves are running second in the southern division, behind reigning champion Ozamiz Cotta, with two wins and one loss, while the Manilans dropped their first two games.

NBC EVP and Tagaytay Mayor Bambol Tolentino (second from right) and Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas shake hands after the latter agreed to support the IBL/Toyota Iloilo-backed Warriors in the NBC. Looking on are Iloilo Basketball League president Snook Divinagracia, NBC sec gen Tito Palma and IBL director Alfie Lagman.

RACING

BY TOP CHOICE

Manila's Style/Magpakaliman (1), Batang Westside (8), Manila's Smile (7)

Race 6—(Super 6/Ort/Tri)—West N Wild (6), Mesmerize (7), Royal Rose (2), He's a Batong/All Powerful (8), Daddy's Girl (12), Bold Lucky (4)

Race 7—(Penta/Ort/Tri)—Deity (4), Mercurian (9), Remus (8), Game Over (2), Shining Lance (7)

Race 8—(Penta/Ort/Tri)—Bronte (4), Blitzkrieg (1), Chicklet (5), Golden Touch (13), Original (8)

Race 9—(Super 6/Ort/Tri)—Look Of Love (8), King View (5), Mano Po (4), Heart Of Jonna (6), Andee's Whisper (13), Latin Music (14)

Race 1—(Ort/Tri)—Tiger Lewis (8), Shadow Quest (4), Strong Will (7), Tennessee (5)

Race 2—(Ort/Tri)—Casanova (4), Il Amorosa (6), Sound Value (1), Mas Que Nada (3)

Race 3—(Penta/Ort/Tri)—Empire Lady (1), Collective Dreams (7), Brazen Truth (5), Divine Right (3), El Cid (6)

Race 4—(Penta/Ort/Tri)—Rebecca's Magic (11), Sunline (3), Crystal City (9), Sunny Forex (6), Clear Stone (10)

Race 5—(Ort/Tri)—Ronzie Stays (6),

Hooray for the U-Ha booters

Pin-up football darlings part ways in U-17 tilt

By Roy Luarca

COACH'S DELIGHT: Members of the U-Ha girls' squad and mentor Ed Formoso (center) take a break in training.

IT STARTED OUT AS A TEAM OF close-knit cousins and friends who played football for fun. In five years, it has transformed itself into a competitive club that's ready to produce national players.

The U-Ha Girls Futbol Club has gone a long way from its humble beginnings in 2001, when giggling members, playing with full passion but little direction, were collectively called Real Kids, Orange Crush and Purple Dinosaurs.

Now, U-Ha (short for Unity and Harmony) founder and coach Ed Formoso can brag that all 16 members of the club have landed berths in two opposing sides in the Philippine Football Federation's U-17 National Women's Championship in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, from May 7-14.

Football for fun

Formoso's dream of honing the "football-for-fun" side into a competition-sharp squad has borne fruit.

Thanks to his relentless training and nurturing, the U-Ha girls, recognizable for their orange-colored bibs, are ready to step onto the pitch and knock in the goals in football hotbed Negros Occidental.

While he expects all 16 to perform above expectations and display good football skills, Formoso's biggest thrill and gratification comes from knowing that he will be seeing all of them in action in the national football event, even though they're in opposing sides.

The National Capital Region Football Association and the Muntinlupa-Parañaque-Las Piñas Football Association (MPL) are the two PFF-member associations that will have their share of U-Ha players.

1990 babies

NCR is coached by Hans Smit and Tony Lopez of De La Salle Zobel while MPL will be headed by Ernie Nierras, Poten Fernandez of Woodrose School and Malou Rubio, the 2004 Women's Footballer of the Year.

U-Ha 1990—all its players were born in 1990—is made up of Arantxa and Pia Santos, Miel Ampil and Tasha Alquiros of Woodrose School; Jessica Ryon and Anna Frumenti of Southville International School, April Cuenca of Miriam College and La Sallians Yvette Gaston, Pia Bravo, Chin Bautista, Tricia Espino, Yael Umali, Kaira Dimatulac, Christine del Carmen, Miki Sakaki and Rebecca Formoso.

The girls also play for their school teams, which is another source of pride for Formoso, who doubles as media promotions publicity head of the Philippine Football Federation (PFF).

He's dying to see his girls, now blossoming into lovely young ladies, strut their impressive stuff in the football field.

Truflex tennis seeds hardly work up a sweat

THIRD SEED MARLO ESPEDIDO AND FOURTH seed Patrick Arevalo scored easy victories yesterday to lead the first-round winners in the boys' 16-under division of the Philta-Truflex National Age Group Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Espedido clobbered Mark Jimenez, 6-1, 6-1, to advance against Juan Fidel Regis, who posted a hard-earned a 7-6 (5), 6-4 decision over Von Anthony Dellaban.

Arevalo blasted Niño Manguiat, 6-0, 6-0, to advance against Akio Sy, who routed Brian Amoranto, 6-1, 6-1.

Jose Emmanuel Narvaez, a 6-4, 6-2 winner over Albert Balderas, will face top seed Mark Balce, who together with second seed John Francis Largo drew first-round byes.

In other matches, Nico Katigbak blanked Alberto Gomez, 6-0, 6-0; Edlee Bryan Sabado defeated Neil Patrick Paez, 6-1, 6-2; Mark Ramos downed Jeremy Carreon, 6-4, 6-1; and Julian Narvaez trounced Anton Punzalan, 6-4, 6-3; to gain second-round berths in their respective divisions in this event backed by PLDT, Cebuana Lhuillier, Pera Padala, Le Soleil de Boracay, Sigsigland and Ralco Commercial Trading and Chris Sports.

Other results: Unisex 10-under—Joshua Cano d. Agrill Canizares, 6-1, 3-6, 6-3; Eric Olivarez d. Angela Subga, 6-0, 6-1; Martin Opulencia d. Patricia Paez, 6-3, 6-1; Kyle Parpan d. Margaret Flores, 6-3, 6-0; Claudio Canlas d. Joel Atienza, 6-2, 6-1.

Lim, Ramos barge into JVC quarterfinals

CASSANDRA LIM AND SAMANTHA RAMOS hammered separate foes in straight sets to barge into the girls' 10-under quarterfinals of the JVC Open Juniors Badminton Championships at SM North Edsa over the weekend.

Playing out of Poveda, the top-ranked Lim downed Greencourt's Lois Locsen, 21-13, 21-6, while Marikina Sports Hub's Ramos routed Juby Evangelista of 5AM Club, 21-7, 21-13.

Ingrid Obinial of Malolos, Patrize Israel of Sportszone, Abbygale Evangelista of 5AM Club, Joella de Vera of Whakers, Jona Juanilo of RAQ4 and Marina Caculitan of Woodros also advanced in the event backed by Victor, exclusively distributed by Pcome Industrial Sales, Bingo Bonanza, Snickers Chocolate, Hanford and L-Time Studio.

Obinial and Abbygale Evangelista scored walkover wins; Israel routed Michelle Cruz of La Salle-Zobel, 21-4, 21-7; De Vera held off Alyssa Leonardo of Malolos, 21-19, 21-12; Juanilo beat Hasmin Labay of Pasig, 21-10, 21-13; and Caculitan routed Larriyn Ballesteros, 21-6, 21-4.

MVBA CAGING

Lhuillier Cebu blasts Iloilo

ILOILO CITY—M. LHUILLIER KWARTA PADALA-CEBU won a third straight game in the ML Kwarta Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference on Sunday after blasting Toyota-Iloilo, 86-72, at the University of San Agustin Gym.

New recruit and former pro Stephen Padilla topscored with 15 points, while Alan Caputolan banged in 14 markers as M. Lhuillier firmed up its hold of the overall lead in the Visayas Division.

The visiting Jewelers of coach Yayoy Alcoseba employed pressed the Warriors hard all game, feasting on a string of Iloilo for the rout.

Power-playing Enrico Llanto added 11 points for M. Lhuillier.

VISAYAS DIVISION STANDINGS

	W	L
M. Lhuillier-Cebu	3	0
Cebu Toledo	1	1
Toyota-Iloilo	0	1
Mantawi Traders	0	2
West Negros	x	x

GAME TODAY (*Xavier University*)
5:30 p.m.—Cagayan de Oro Rapids vs. PacMan-GenSan

Guard Eldrin Senieres scattered 20 points to lead Iloilo, which also got 13 points from Edgar Castro and 12 from Elben Leonida.

Meanwhile, the winless Cagayan de Oro Rapids will try to keep their semis hopes in the Mindanao Division when they host PacMan-GenSan of boxing idol Manny Pacquiao today at the Xavier University Gym at 5:30 p.m.

The 0-4 Rapids are a full game behind idle Pryce Pharma-MisOr (2-4).

In their last outing against Pryce Pharma last March 29, the Rapids' high scoring trio of Jong Rebuya, Gabriel Maloloy-on and Abe Galinato could only combine for 16 points. They average close to 50 points an outing.

The Scores:

M. LHUILLIER-CEBU 86—Padilla 15, Caputolan 14, Llanto 11, Rodriguez 9, Ramirez 8, Enriquez 7, Ocanada 6, Piodo 6, Aying 5, Mepana 3, Manigo 2.

TOYOTA-ILOILO 72—Senieres 20, Castro 13, Leonida 12, Poral 9, Bautista 9, Sencil 5, Balgos 4.

Quarters: 18-10, 45-33, 68-53, 86-72.

Webb forces playoff with eagle, then pips Ochoa for title

RANCHO MIRAGE, CALIFORNIA—LPGA Hall of Famer Karrie Webb beat Lorena Ochoa with a birdie at the first playoff hole on Sunday to win the Kraft Nabisco Championship, first major of the women's season.

Australia's Webb had eagled the final hole of regulation to complete a flawless 65 that saw her erase a seven-shot deficit and pull even with overnight leader Ochoa.

"I was working so hard on trying to win again," Webb said. "I think every week I thought I could win. I don't think I ever teed it up and didn't think I couldn't win."

The Mexican's round had included four bogeys and two birdies that left her needing an eagle of her own at the last to force the playoff.

She got it, completing an even-par 72 to join Webb with a four-round total of 279.

Meanwhile, teenager Michelle Wie failed to nab the birdie she needed at the final hole to join the playoff.

Wie, who started the day in second, three shots behind Ochoa, finished with a 70 for 280, sharing third place with fellow American Natalie Gulbis, who closed with her second straight 68.

Webb, who won the career Grand Slam at age 26, is the only player to win all five events that have been designated as women's majors.

Despite being on top, Webb wasn't happy.

"I realized I was taking it for granted," Webb said. "I don't know if it was because I was uncomfortable or what. I wanted to feel it again, though."

While the mind was willing, the body was not. Webb won one major from 2002 to 2005, the Women's British Open, and went on a drought of regular tournament victories as well. She won one event in 2003 and 2004 and didn't win anything last year.

Early on this season, Webb showed no indication that she was ready to make a comeback. She had played in three events and finished tied for 26th, 49th and 24th.

But the signs of Webb's emergence at this event might have been given a strong signal in the second round. Webb was at the 15th hole, 140 yards away and hit a beautiful 7-iron that went into the hole for an eagle. She ended the second round five strokes behind Lorena Ochoa.

"It's nice to be back in here," Webb said about coming into the media room on Friday. "I haven't been in here for a while." *AFP*

KARRIE Webb celebrates in Champions Pond. AP

Phil rules BellSouth golf by 13

DULUTH, GEORGIA—PHIL MICKELSON COMpleted his US Masters preparations in emphatic style on Sunday, coasting to a record third BellSouth Classic title by 13 shots at the TPC at Sugarloaf.

The defending BellSouth champion, eight strokes clear overnight, eagled two of the last six holes for a seven-under-par 65 and a four-round total of 28-under 260.

His winning margin was the largest on the PGA Tour since Tiger Woods clinched the 2000 US Open at Pebble Beach by 15 strokes, and has been bettered only six times in Tour history.

"It was certainly a fun week and I was very pleased with the way I played," a beaming Mickelson told reporters after competing the second wire-to-wire victory of his career.

"I had some good practice days but it really means a lot to actually have the scores reflect the way I felt I was playing, in fact, maybe even a little bit lower. That was nice.

"I feel as though I'm starting to get really sharp as far as distance control and some of the areas I've been working on.

"I think those areas are going to be critical next week for a good performance at Augusta, especially given the changes and how difficult it's playing."

BellSouth champion in 2000 and again last year, the American left-hander birdied three of the first six holes to stretch his lead to 10.

Play was delayed for 45 minutes because of the threat of lightning after he reached the 15th tee, but Mickelson went on to record the 28th PGA Tour won of his career by holing a 24-foot eagle putt at the last.

Mickelson also became the tournament's first repeat winner since compatriot Hale Irwin in 1977. Irwin is among seven players who have triumphed twice at the BellSouth.

American Zach Johnson birdied the last four holes to close with a two-under-par 70 and a tie for second place with Spain's Jose Maria Olazabal (69) on 15-under 273.

Asked if he had any concern about peaking too early for next week's Masters, Mickelson replied: "I don't think so.

Mickelson, who produced sparkling form all week from tee to green, broke the BellSouth record for 72 holes.

The previous mark was jointly held at 23-under 265 by American Andy Bean (1979) and Canada's Dave Barr (1987). *Reuters*

NETS' Richard Jefferson does a reverse slum against the Heat. REUTERS

Pistons win, clinch home court edge

NEW YORK—THE DETROIT PISTONS CLINCHED home court advantage through the Eastern Conference playoffs on Sunday with a 109-102 win over the Phoenix Suns in Auburn Hills.

Chauncey Billups hit a 3-pointer with 3:40 to play to put the Pistons ahead for good, giving the two-time defending East champions the extra home game in Conference series play.

"This is the third of our five steps," Detroit coach Flip Saunders told reporters after the game.

The first two goals Saunders had were to make the playoffs and win the division. After sealing home court advantage, the last two are to have the best record in the league and win a second NBA title in three seasons.

"This one might be the most important of the first four, because of the 2-2-1-1-1 format in the conference finals."

The Pistons (59-14) have lost just three home games all season and have the NBA's best overall record.

But Detroit had to rally from several big deficits to get their latest win, their eighth in the past nine games.

The Pistons trailed by 17 in the first half and by 16 points at one point in the third quarter. But two 7-0 runs in the third kept the game close until the fourth, when the Pistons finally found another gear and surged ahead.

"They come back all the time," Phoenix coach Mike D'Antoni said. "That's probably why they've been to the Finals the past two years."

Complete Results: Detroit 109, Phoenix 102; Minnesota 106, Golden State 104; (OT) LA Lakers 104, Houston 88; Dallas 103, Denver 79; Memphis 98, Atlanta 87; Cleveland 101, Charlotte 97; New Jersey 90, Miami 78; Philadelphia 114, NY Knicks 95; N.O./ Oklahoma City 120, Toronto 113 (OT)

Detroit got balanced scoring from its starters, who extended their NBA record by playing their 73rd game starting together.

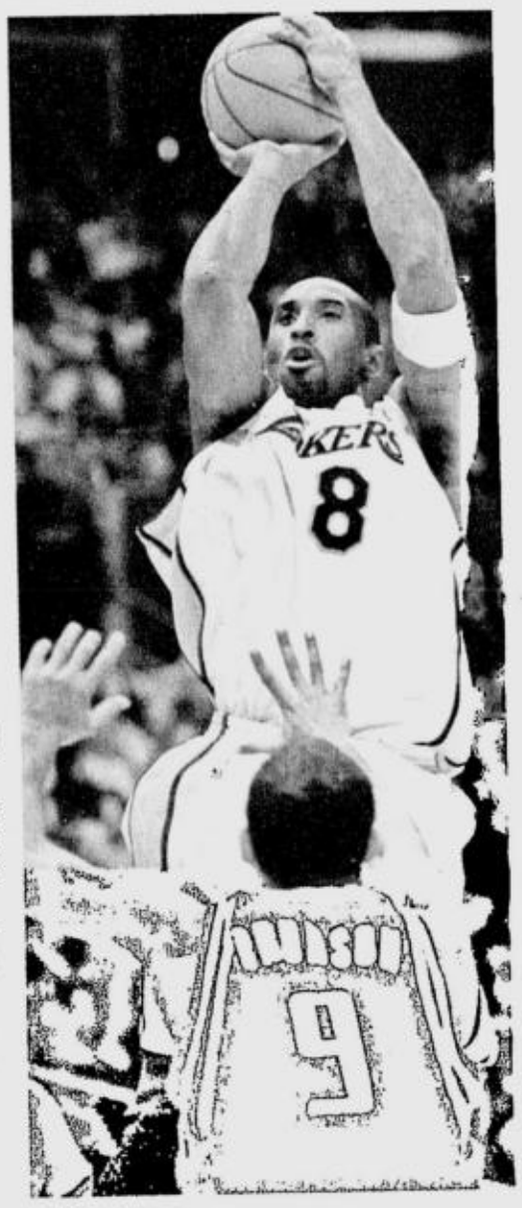
Billups scored 35 points, Tayshaun Prince had 23 and eight rebounds, while Rasheed Wallace had 15 points and 11 rebounds.

The streak will end this week when Wallace serves a one-game suspension for picking up his 16th technical foul of the season.

Shawn Marion led Phoenix with 32 points and 10 rebounds, while Steve Nash had 13 points and dished out nine assists.

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant had 43 points to lead the Lakers past the Houston Rockets 104-88.

It was Bryant's 23rd 40-point game of the season, tying Elgin Baylor's franchise record, and his seventh straight game with at least 40 points. Lamar Odom added 21 points. *Reuters*



LAKERS' Kobe Bryant shoots over the Rockets' Rick Brunson en route to 43 points. AP

Ucla tries to relive tradition

INDIANAPOLIS — TRADITION-RICH UCLA will attempt to win its 12th national basketball championship when it faces Florida in the NCAA title game Monday night.

UCLA put the defensive clamps on Louisiana State on Saturday night, winning 59-45, while Florida ended the miraculous tournament run of upstart George Mason with a 73-58 rout.

"I know that they have great tradition, they had a lot of great players go through that program," said Florida sophomore forward Joakim Noah, the son of former French Open tennis champion Yannick Noah.

"But I don't think that helps you win the game. So, right now, it's not about tradition. It's about playing basketball, playing the sport that we've been playing since we were little kids.

Florida (32-6) is looking for its first national championship though it has reached the Final Four trice. *Reuters*

US NCAA men's basketball final on Sportsplus: Game Today—9 a.m.—Florida vs. UCLA

FEDERER: A little too good. REUTERS

Federer garners 2nd consecutive Miami title at Ljubicic's expense

MIAMI—WORLD NUMBER ONE Roger Federer showed his superiority when it mattered most on Sunday, edging Croatian Ivan Ljubicic in a tight three sets to claim his second straight Miami ATP Masters Series title.

As he almost always does, Federer proved just a little too good, emerging with a 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (8/6) victory over the tenacious sixth seed in a match that took almost exactly an hour for each set.

The victory in the $6.9-million men's and women's hardcourt tournament marked the second straight year that Federer has completed the double in the first two prestigious Masters Series tournaments of the season—at Indian Wells, California, and Miami.

The 24-year-old Swiss improved to 27-1 for the year, a run that included the Australian Open title in January as well as the title in Doha.

The dominant force in the men's game admitted he welcomed the kind of battle offered by Ljubicic as a way to show his ongoing success is deserved.

"I like the challenge," Federer said. "This is very nice, to have such a close match and come through it and show once again that I really belong to the No. 1 position and deserve all these trophies I win. *AFP*

Instant replay an instant success

SINGAPORE—INSTANT-REPLAY technology used at last week's Nasdaq-100 Open in Miami to settle disputed line-calls was a success, organizers and tennis players said.

A total of 161 calls were challenged during the March 22-April 2 combined men's and women's event. Of those, 53 were successful.

"If (Miami) is any indication, fans are in for an even more entertaining experience as we continue to roll out electronic line calling at... WTA Tour events," said the tour's Angie Cunningham.

Under the new system, which is due to be used at a grand slam for the first time at this year's US Open, each player receives two challenges per set to review line calls. *Reuters*

Renault bolsters Formula 1 quest

MELBOURNE—A DOMINANT RENAULT TEAM head to Imola this month buoyed by wins in the opening three Grand Prix of the Formula One year and confident of carrying their championship form into the European season.

Spanish world champion Fernando Alonso extended his championship lead to 14 points after his second victory of the season in the Australian Grand Prix here Sunday.

The 24-year-old Renault ace led for almost all laps of the race, beating McLaren championship rival Kimi Raikkonen by 1.8 seconds with Toyota's Ralf Schumacher nearly 23 more seconds behind in third.

Alonso beat Michael Schumacher in the season-opening race in Bahrain and teammate Giancarlo Fisichella led a Renault one-two in the second race in Malaysia to keep the French team in the hunt for back-to-back world titles.

Alonso has snared 28 out of a possible 30 points from the opening three races and heads to Imola in San Marino full of confidence for the April 23 grand prix.

"This was a very different race to the other two so far this season," Alonso said.

"In Bahrain, I was fighting with Michael Schumacher all the way and in Malaysia it was Jenson Button and I battling for second place.

"But in Melbourne it was quite comfortable. There were no fights and I was very relaxed for a lot of the race."

Renault is confident it can repel an assault from main rival McLaren when the F1 circus returns to its European heartland. *AFP*

Recruit lifts White Sox to opening victory

CHICAGO—NEW RECRUIT JIM THOME helped the World Series champions Chicago White Sox open the 2006 season with a comfortable 10-4 triumph over the Cleveland Indians at a rainy US Cellular Field on Sunday.

Picked up in an offseason trade from the Philadelphia Phillies, the veteran slugger crushed a two-run homer in the fourth inning to put the White Sox 6-3 ahead in a drawn-out curtain-raiser for the new campaign.

Thome's blast came after second baseman Tadahito Iguchi had broken a 3-3 tie with a sacrifice fly to score Juan Uribe, while rookie center-fielder Brian Anderson also shone by going two-for-three from the plate with two RBIs.

A sellout crowd of 38,802 was on hand to help celebrate last season's triumph while ushering in the new season, though the stands were considerably less full following a two hour, 57 minute rain delay in the middle of the fourth inning.

Reliever Brandon McCarthy picked up the win for the White Sox, replacing starter Mark Buehrle after the rain delay.

It was a bad opening day for Cleveland starter C.C. Sabathia, who left the game in the third inning with a strained right abdominal muscle and the 6-foot-7, 290-pound left-hander was scheduled to be examined on Monday.

Reliever Fernando Cabrera took over and was awarded the loss for the Tribe as wayward Indians pitching surrendered nine walks.

On the offensive side, Eduardo Perez hit a two-run homer for Cleveland.

Before the game, the White Sox unveiled their 2005 World Series championship banner in a ceremony that included a highlights video on the Jumbotron, fireworks and the playing of Queen's "We Are the Champions." *Reuters*

RECORDING artist Josh Kelly performs before the opening day game between the White Sox and Indians Sunday. AP

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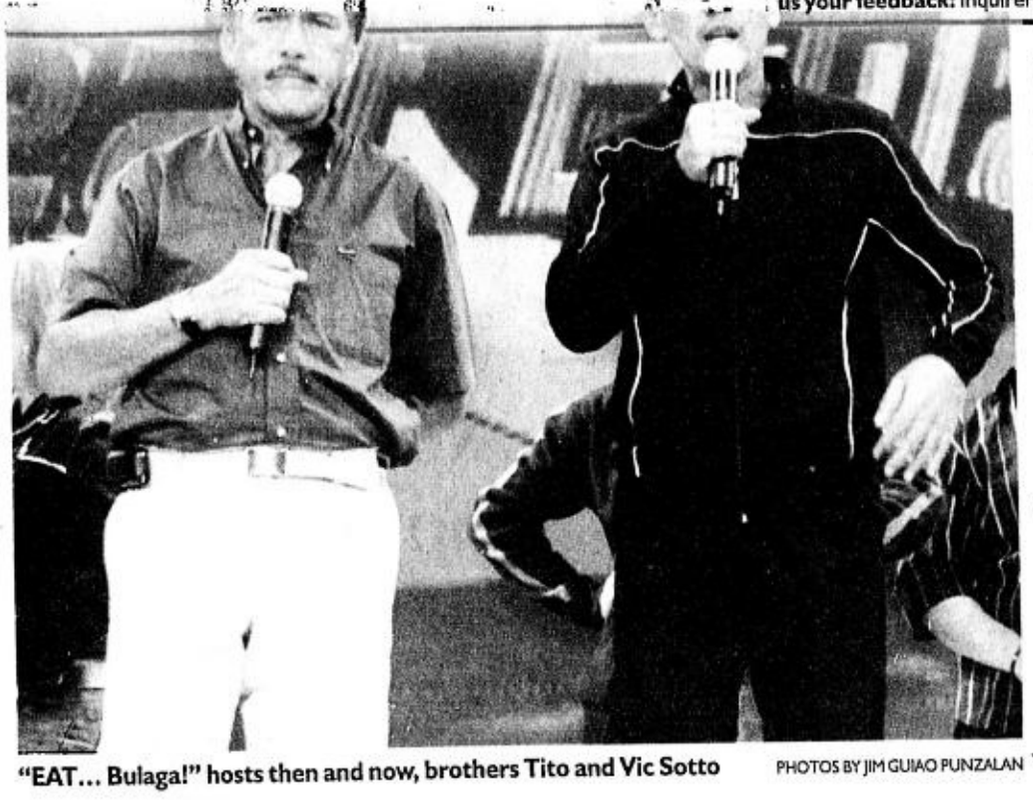
ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Emmie G. Velarde

us your feedback: Inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)



"EAT... Bulaga!" hosts then and now, brothers Tito and Vic Sotto PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

'We never said it was original'

WE NEVER CLAIMED IT WAS AN original concept. From the very start, we said that the movie was inspired by 'Somewhere in Time.' We just presented it in a manner that the Filipino audience would like best."

This was the reaction of GMA Network Films president Annette Gozon-Abrogar to tabloid reports that the plot of "Moments of Love," now in theaters, had been copied from two Korean films released in 2000.

According to the reports, "Mo-

WE NEVER/ A2-2

'No ulterior motive' for 'Eat Bulaga' bash

By Marinel R. Cruz

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO me, I realized that life is fleeting. We're all just passing through. I then [realized] who my real friends are," said Television and Production Exponents Inc. (Tape) president Tony Tuviera, who underwent a successful heart bypass surgery last year.

Tape is the producer of the country's longest-running noontime show "Eat... Bulaga!" on GMA 7. The company recently hosted a lavish thanksgiving party for members of the entertainment press, giving away millions of pesos worth of cash and other prizes.

Tuviera continued: "I said to myself, all this would not be possible without the help of the entertainment media. I told my staff, we've been working with them for 26 years, why don't we give thanks to them."

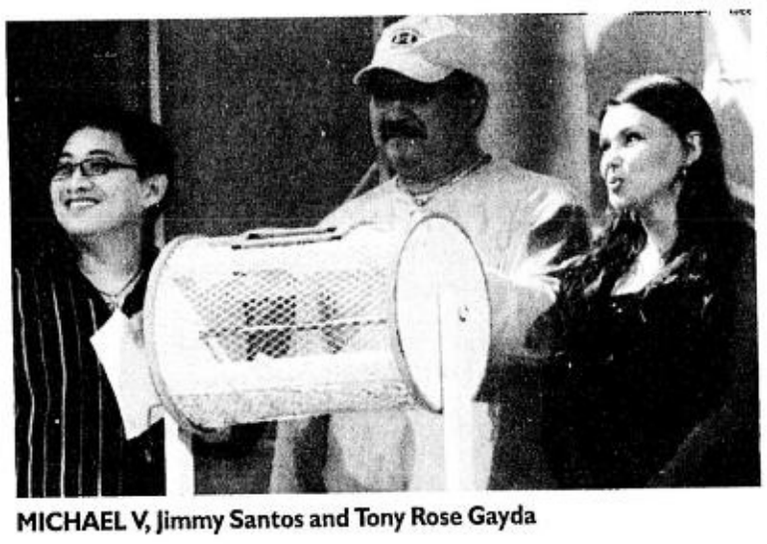
That night at the Le Pavillon in Pasay City, writer Wally Peralta won a cash prize of P50,000 in the "Laban o Bawi" contest. Columnist Ambet Nabus won a total of P52,000 in the "Todo Knock Out" segment.

Four writers brought home P25,000 each; five others won P20,000; seven, P10,000; and eight, P5,000. During the program, 10 cell phones were given away, as well as 11 Nikon and Olympus digital cameras and 20 Magic Sing (karaoke) microphones.

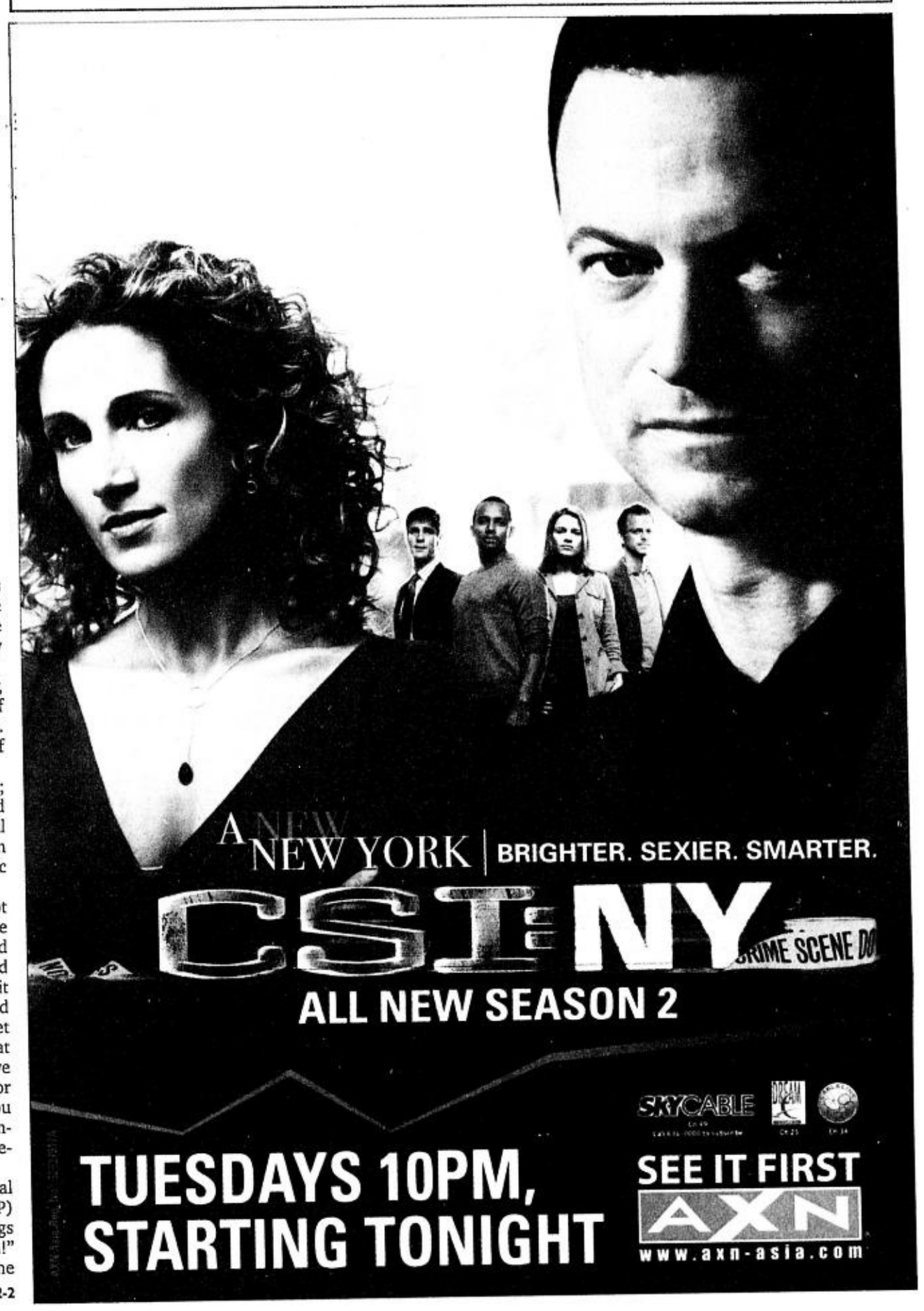
All the hosts of the noontime show, except for Joey de Leon—who had flown to the United States earlier to visit his children—joined the media in a buffet dinner that started at 7 p.m. Tape executive vice president for productions Malou Choa-Fagar also mingled with the reporters.

An audio visual presentation (AVP) about the beginnings of "Eat... Bulaga!" was shown at the

NO ULTERIOR/ A2-2



MICHAEL V, Jimmy Santos and Tony Rose Gayda



CHEER FACTOR

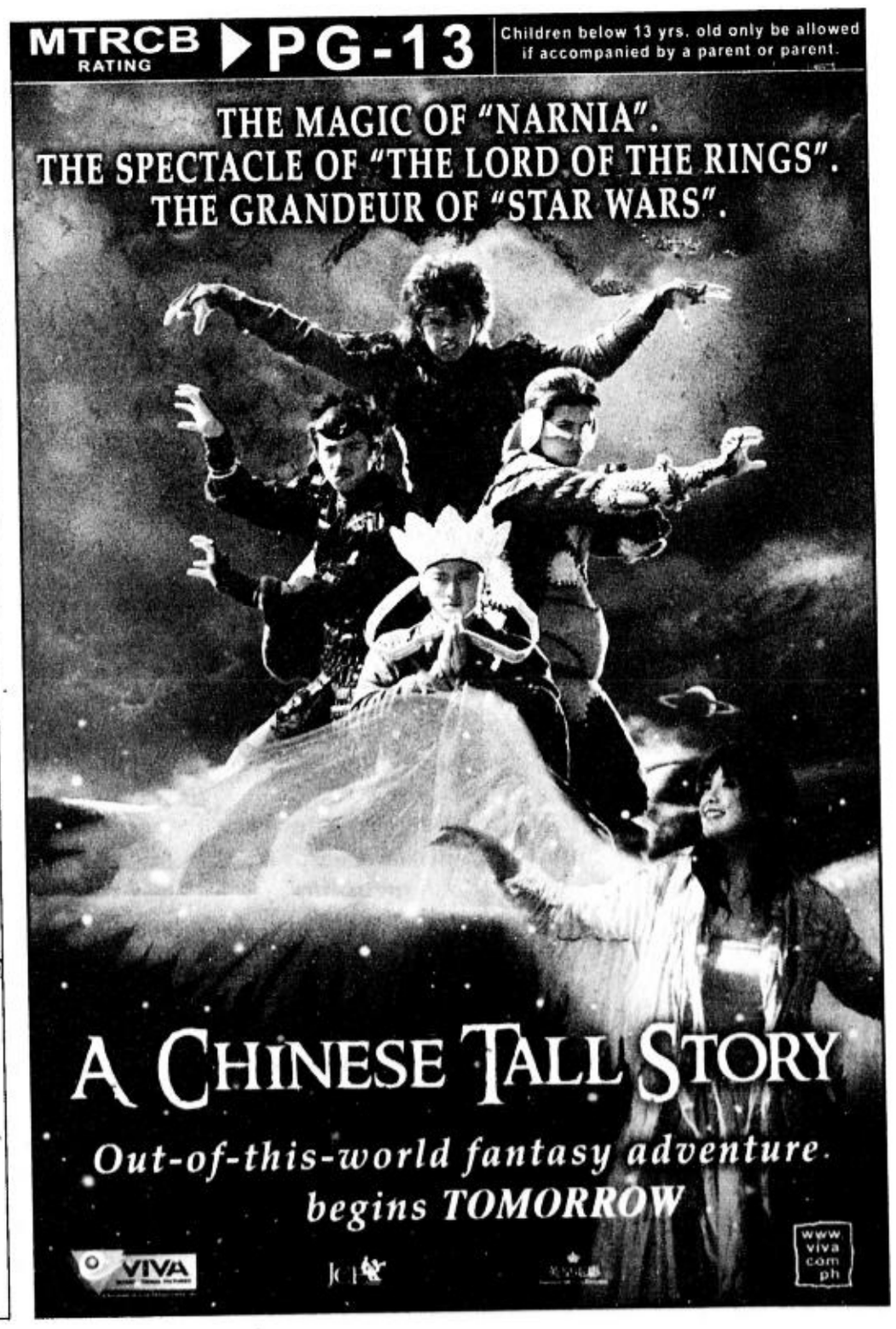
Superman in my lap?

LOS ANGELES—Superman leaps tall buildings in a single bound, flies faster than a speeding bullet and, this summer, will land in audience laps in a 3-D version of "Superman Returns," set for Imax movie theaters.

Imax and Warner Bros. film studio said they plan to feature 20 minutes of the big-budget Hollywood movie in three dimensions when it hits theaters in late June, marking the first live-action, 3-D movie on giant Imax screens.

The plan highlights an ongoing trend by some major Hollywood studios toward placing more 3-D movies in theaters to generate excitement and lure fans in the face of a recent decline in movie theater attendance.

"Superman Returns," which debuts on June 30, stars Brandon Routh as the "Man of Steel." *Reuters*



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2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

3 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

4 JUST FRIENDS
11:15 1:25 3:35 5:45 7:55 10:00

5 ICE AGE 2
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00

6 BASIC INSTINCT 2
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7 NANNY MCPHEE
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

8 VENOM
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9 SHE'S THE MAN
12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00

10 ULTRAVIOLET
1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

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1 ICE AGE 2
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2 NANNY MCPHEE 12:00 1:50 3:40
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7 BASIC INSTINCT 2
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1 SHE'S THE MAN
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2 ICE AGE 2
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3 BASIC INSTINCT 2
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7 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
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8 MOMENTS OF LOVE
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NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

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2 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
3 JUST FRIENDS
4 VENOM
5 ICE AGE 2
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE

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G

3 ICE AGE 2
12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
G

4 VENOM
2:15, 4:25, 6:35, 8:45, 11:00
R-13

SCENE-STEALING guests Oyo Boy Sotto with rumored girlfriend Angel Locsin

'No ulterior motive' . . .

From page A2-0

start of the program. Drama actress Marian Rivera performed a dance number. Jake Roxas, Mylene Dizon, Oyo Boy Sotto and Rita Avila, stars of GMA 7's afternoon soap series "Agawin Mo Ang Lahat sa Akin," helped pick the raffle winners.

"We've long wanted to host a party like this, *ngayon lang natuloy*," said Tuviera. "There's really no ulterior motive. We're here just to enjoy."

MARIAN Rivera

'We never said it was original'

From page A2-1

ments" was based on Kim Jeong-kweon's "Ditto" and Lee Hyun-seung's "Il Mare." Like the Korean films, the protagonists in "Moments of Love" live in different time periods. In "Ditto," the ill-fated lovers are connected via a two-way radio; in "Moments," the lead characters Divina (Iza Calzado) and Marco (Dindong Dantes) speak through a rotary-dial telephone.

Jeannot Szwarc's "Somewhere in Time" tells of a young writer (Christopher Reeve) mystified by an old portrait of a beautiful stage actress (Jane Seymour). He uses mind power to turn back time and find the woman.

"I think we were misinterpreted when we said that 'Moments' is an extraordinary story," Abrogar told INQUIRER Entertainment. "Maybe people thought that we meant the story was original. What we wanted to say was that the movie was not your usual love story [but not that] we invented it."

Ecstatic

Abrogar said, however, that she was ecstatic about the movie's performance at the box office. "The theater owners' initial response to it was lukewarm," she recounted. "But from only one theater per SM mall on the first day, we are now in two theaters. At Glorietta in Ayala Center, we opened in the small theater. The next day, we were transferred to the big one."

Film producers from other Southeast Asian countries, Switzerland and Australia have been surprisingly curious about "Moments," said Abrogar. "Joey (Abacan, vice president for program and management) brought publicity materials to the Hong Kong Filmarket in March," she said. "He received a lot of inquiries. Now that the movie is in local theaters, we can start sending screeners to other interested parties."

Abacan is set to meet producers from Singapore and Korea this month, he told INQUIRER Entertainment on Monday.

Meanwhile, Abrogar, who became GMA Films president only in 2005, reported that the movie-making arm of the *Kapuso* network is now self-sufficient. She said GMA-7's "re-launching" movie, Mac Alejandre's "Let the Love Begin," earned for the network a total of P55 million.

In 2000, GMA Films produced Joel Lamangan's "Deathrow," about a minor sentenced to death and thrown into jail with hardened criminals.

"That became our seed money for the next movie," Abrogar said of the P55-million profit. "As much as possible we don't want to ask for more money from the network. This is why we can't make 10 or 12 films a year. We'd rather be prudent about our choice of projects."

GMA Films' creative team is "still brainstorming" for its next projects, Abrogar said. "We're thinking of a realistic drama this time."

Marinel R. Cruz

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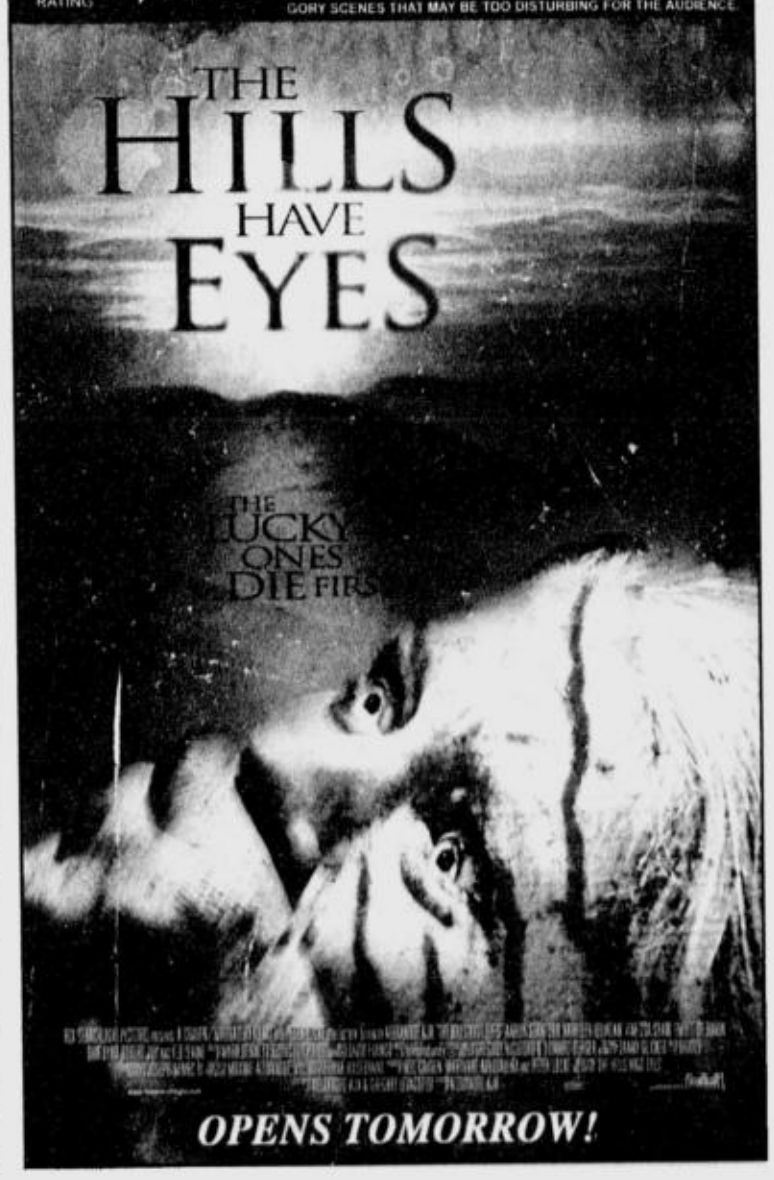

THE HILLS HAVE EYES
THE LUCKY ONES DIE FIRST
OPENS TOMORROW!

JERICHO Rosales and Heart Evangelista JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Define 'deranged'—better yet, let's all . . .

From page A2-6

will protect me from endless controversies! Next issue, please!

Yes! turns 6

I HAD a blast at Yes! mag's sixth anniversary party in Crowne Plaza. Kudos to the mag's wonderful editor **Jo Ann Maglipon** for that well-attended affair. Who could say 'no' to Yes! mag and Jo Ann? It was a happy reunion of sorts for several groups. **Janice de Belen, Gretchen Barretto, Ruffa Gutierrez** and **Maricel Soriano** started almost at the same time in Regal. Seeing them all together that night brought back a lot of memories. Greta brought caviar cakes. GMA 7 (**Dennis Trillo, Ogie Alcasid, Polo Ravales** etc...) and ABS CBN (**Roxanne Guinoo, Joross Gamboa, Sandara Park** etc..) stars delightedly mingled with each other. It didn't matter whether one was a

ROGER MARGALLO

KRIS Aquino and James Yap

Kapuso or a Kapamilya. Everybody was there to pay homage to a mag that has brought a touch of class to show biz!

Still on the Yes! bash: It was heartwarming to see **Lucy Torres** and Goma's ex, **Dawn Zulueta-Lagdameo**, so chummy with each other. Goma was out of town that night, but he would have smiled at seeing the two special ladies in his life together even for a fleeting moment. Estranged couple **John Estrada** and **Janice de Belen** didn't bother to say hi to each other. It only goes to show that their goodbye was final. **Jericho Rosales** and **Heart Evangelista** held hands as they table-hopped. Heart's manager **Angeli Valenciano** and I had a good laugh over her *tampo* toward me about the "Heart-Echo missing in action" piece I earlier wrote. Echo and Heart took it all in stride. In short, we all kissed and made up. Here's to show biz peace!

Just asking:

PAOLO Contis and **Isabel Oli** have a snapshot with their dogs in Paolo's friendster account. The caption says: "Contis Family." They have not admitted their relationship but a picture sure paints a thousand words, doesn't it? Love me, love my dog ... so they say.

Now that Sexbomb has moved on, will "Eat Bulaga" management demand that the dance group change their name since it was **Joey de Leon** who baptized the girls "Sexbomb?" Or will that just serve as Eat's "farewell gift" to the dancers? Tears and souvenirs? Tears of ex-Sexbomb **Sugar** and the group's name as souvenir!

Could it ... could it ... could it be true that **Kris Aquino** and **James Yap** got married last July in **Boy Abunda**'s house with their manager **Dondon Monteverde** as witness? Someone from the National Census and Statistics Office insists she has a copy of the marriage certificate—which she promises to show me ASAP! Will Kris say "Yup, I'm already a Yap!" anytime soon?

About musicianship

RYAN Cayabyab talks about musicianship and the path that solo singers take in search of an original sound on Saturday, April 8, 8 a.m. to 12 noon, at Ryan Cayabyab The Music Studio. Is musicality inherited? Or is it nurtured? How does one hone the quality that makes a singer stand out from the rest? These questions and many more will be answered and discussed in the half day lecture-seminar. Call 844-3330, 843-2874 or (0917) 909-6484.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.)

Religious 'wars' turn viewers off

From page A2-4

derwear supplier. We're aware that all this is part of their personal exchange deals with their suppliers, who in turn enjoy the exposure and the gratis et amore promotion. It's too much, and makes us sick."

(To be continued)

NUT: The erring TV personalities can be censored by the TV networks they work for—if enough viewers complain that their precious viewing time is being eaten up by the self-serving "exchange deals."

Movies on TV

On HBO tomorrow at 9 p.m., "Gothika." April 6 at 12:30 p.m., "The First Wives Club." 2:15 p.m., "Surviving Picasso." 6:10 p.m., "Chasing Liberty." 8 p.m., "Rome 1: The Stolen Eagle." 9 p.m., "Rome 2: How Titus Pullo Brought Down the Republic." 9:45 p.m., "Rome 3: An Owl in A Thornbush." 12:10 a.m., "Out of Africa."

On Cinemax tomorrow at 6:30 a.m., "The Last Hurrah." 3 p.m. "The Appaloosa." 8 p.m., "Death Becomes Her." April 6 at 7:35 a.m., "Cactus Flower." 4:45 p.m., "The Bellboy." 2:20 a.m., "Phantom of the Rue Morgue."

'Late Registration'

Hip-hop maestro **Kanye West** returns with his second album, "Late Registration," which rated eight nominations at the Grammys. His latest album features **Jamie Foxx, Adam Levine, Jay-Z** and **Brandy**.

Be sure to catch **Kanye** this month on [V] as the channel rolls out the red carpet for its latest Chosen One.

'Flame of Recca'

From Monday to Friday at 5:30 p.m., Animax Asia screens "Flame of Recca." Enter the secret world of Ninjas in this action-packed animé based on **Nobuyuki Anzai**'s popular manga series.

Recca Hanabishi's dream of becoming a Ninja comes alive when he learns that he's a descendant of the Hokage Clan. As Recca discovers his powers, he faces a daunting battle against the notorious Uruha organization, to save himself and his beloved princess.

'Go, Diego, Go!'

Say "Hola" to Diego, the bilingual animal rescuer and naturalist who has the ability to talk to animals. He's the title character in "Go, Diego, Go!," a new Nickelodeon program that will take preschoolers on an interactive journey inspired by Latin America and the animals that live in its verdant environment. The show starts telecasting on April 14.

DID YOU KNOW...

INQUIRER Entertainment heard that, at the Michael Bolton show last week, tickets advertised at just a little over P500 were being sold at the Araneta Coliseum box office for more than P900. And it wasn't even because the show was sold out, one upset Bolton fan said. Pre-sold tickets were honored, the fan said, but those who wanted to buy extra tickets for friends—and sit with them—were aghast that they were being charged almost double. Is this true?

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN R18 12:40,3:00,5:20, 7:40,10:00	BASIC INSTINCT 2 R18 12:15,2:45,5:15, 7:45,10:20	NANNY MCPHEE G 1:10,3:20,5:30,7:40,9:50
JUST FRIENDS R13 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	VENOM R13 1:40,3:40,5:40,7:40,9:40	ICE AGE 2 G 11:30,1:30,3:30, 5:30,7:30,9:30

MATINEE P111.00 – FREE SEATING – SCREENINGS BEFORE 5:00 PM – MON. TO FRI.

SHANG CINEPLEX
1 ICE AGE 2 MTRCB: GP 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00
2 ICE AGE 2 MTRCB: GP 2:15, 4:25, 6:35, 8:45
3 BASIC INSTINCT 2 MTRCB: R-18 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 LMF
4 NANNY MCPHEE MTRCB: GP 2.00, 6.40 JUST FRIENDS MTRCB.R-13 4.20,9.00
PREMIERE THEATRE VENOM MTRCB R-13 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10.00
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice.
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MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
9th floor Shangrila Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City Telephone: 633 2227 / 6337851 loc. 171
1 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2 GP
2 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2 GP
3 (DOLBY) BASIC INSTINCT 2 R18
4 (DOLBY) JUST FRIENDS R13; NANNY MCPHEE GP
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) VENOM R13

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (SDDS) LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN / SHE'S THE MAN
2 (SDDS) NANNY MCPHEE
3 (DTS) ICE AGE-2
4 GOLD (DTS) ICE AGE-2
5 GOLD (DOLBY) BASIC INSTINCT-2
6 GOLD (SDDS) VENOM
7 GOLD (DOLBY) JUST FRIENDS
8 (DOLBY DIGITAL) MOMENTS OF LOVE
9 (DOLBY DIGITAL) V FOR VENDETTA
10 (DOLBY DIGITAL) ULTRAVIOLET

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) BASIC INSTINCT 2
2 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
3 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
4 (DOLBY) VENOM

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 ICE AGE 2
2 BASIC INSTINCT 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 VENOM

Blue Wave MARKETPLACE
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) BASIC INSTINCT 2
2 (DOLBY) MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
4 (DOLBY) VENOM

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 HOUSE OF FURY
2 (DTS) MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
4 VENOM

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
3 (DTS) VENOM
4 HOUSE OF FURY

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 THE DARK
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) HOSTEL

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 16 BLOCKS
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) HOSTEL
4 (DTS) V FOR VENDETTA

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) ULTRAVIOLET

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
2 VENOM
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 BASIC INSTINCT 2
5 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN

Starmall EDSA-SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 BASIC INSTINCT-2
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 VENOM

Market Place
Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 THE DARK
3 V FOR VENDETTA
4 RESERVED

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 BROKE BACK MOUNTAIN
2 THE DARK

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) BEAUTIFULL BOXER
2 NAGDADALAGA
3 BEAUTIFULL BOXER
4 (DTS) THE DARK

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) HOUSE OF FURY
2 XXX.COM
3 (DTS) ICE AGE-2
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 VENOM

Metropolis Star Cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994
1 BASIC INSTINCT-2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 VENOM
4 ICE AGE-2

Masagana CINEMA 2000
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 BASIC INSTINCT 2

Center Mall Cinema
Bagulo Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Bagulo City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 ICE AGE 2
2 VENOM

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) ICE AGE-2
2 VENOM
3 (DTS EX) MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DOLBY) RESERVED
4 (DTS) RESERVED

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 GLORY ROAD
2 ICE AGE 2
3 16 BLOCKS
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 HOSTEL

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 HOSTEL
3 (DOLBY) FINAL DESTINATION
4 (DTS) HOUSE OF FURY

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 THE DARK
2 DARK DANCER

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 AEON FLUX

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Religious 'wars' on TV turn viewers off

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

THERE'S RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE Philippines, and the liberal and liberating principle exists on television as well, with different denominations having TV channels of their own.

Sometimes, however, those ostensibly spiritual channels are misused so badly that they leave a bad taste in viewers' mouths.

This happens when "warring" religious denominations use their channels, not so much to espouse and spread their spiritual message, but to criticize and malign other faiths.

In fact, some religious channels devote practically all of their telecast time to lashing out at and insulting the head of a rival group! They take great pains to tape-record his statements, and proceed to debunk them, point by point.

This is disturbing to behold, because religion is supposed to promote peace and harmony, not internecine strife and vicious discord.

The fact that these warring groups are Christian is another great disappointment, because **Jesus Christ** presented himself as the great espouser of ecumenism.

We hope that the warring denominations will remember this, and devote themselves to more positive and beneficial pursuits from here on in!

We know that some members of these groups may not approve of these comments, but we aren't alone in making them.

Other viewers we know are similarly dismayed at the bad example that these "religious TV wars" are setting for their children—so, please desist.

Feedback

From Cheryle R. Otoniel of Makati City: "The wrong use of adult songs in singing contests for children should be criticized, so keep doing so. It gives the young singers a confused idea of what they're supposed to do.

"As children, they are appealing because of their innocence, but when they sing mature songs about romantic love, they are made to perform in a more adult way, so there goes their innocence!

"We keep complaining that our youth is going down the wrong road, but we also push them in that direction by making them grow up too fast.

"TV is such an influential medium that it should be used responsibly, because it can send out the wrong signals and make them look like they're the way that people should behave…"

From Ms. Edy G. Reyes of Makati City: "I am a regular follower of your noteworthy articles. I dare say that you are one of the most respected, intelligent and sensible writer/editors, so I would like to share with you these queries and observations on the local TV scene, for your discernment or otherwise: **Exchange deals.** Which body can censure TV personalities who enumerate and acknowledge credits for every Tom, Dick and Harry as their stylists, optometrists, couturiers, et al? The only item they skip mentioning is their un-

RELIGIOUS/ A2-3

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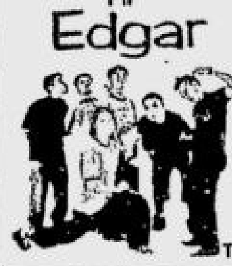
EVENT CALENDAR — SM CENTER stage — EVENT CALENDAR

Parokya ni Edgar



3
APRIL 7, 2006
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4
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SATURDAY • 8:30 PM
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METRO MANILA

THE PODIUM CINEMA
ICE AGE 2
12:15 FS / 12:40 MF / 02:45
04:50 / 06:55 / 08:30LFS
09:00 LMF / 10:30 END
JUST FRIENDS
02:15 FS / 02:45 MF / 04:50
06:55 / 8:30LFS
09:00 LMF / 10:35 END

SM MEGACINEMA
1 16 BLOCKS
11:40FS / 12:00 MF
02:10 / 04:00LFS
04:20 LMF / 06:10 END
2 VENOM
3 ICE AGE 2
4 RESERVED
5 ULTRAVIOLET
6 ICE AGE 2
7 V FOR VENDETTA
8 FINAL DESTINATION 3
9 MOMENTS OF LOVE
10 JUST FRIENDS
11 NANNY McPHEE
12 SHE'S THE MAN

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2
5 ULTRAVIOLET
6 SHE'S THE MAN
7 JUST FRIENDS
8 VENOM

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 VENOM
4 ULTRAVIOLET

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 SHE'S THE MAN
2 FINAL DESTINATION 3
3 NANNY McPHEE
4 ULTRAVIOLET
5 JUST FRIENDS
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE
7 VENOM
8 ICE AGE 2
9 ICE AGE 2
10 MOMENTS OF LOVE
11 FEARLESS
12 V FOR VENDETTA

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 ICE AGE 2
2 JUST FRIENDS
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 SHE'S THE MAN
5 ULTRAVIOLET
6 FINAL DESTINATION 3
7 NANNY McPHEE
8 VENOM
9 V FOR VENDETTA
10 SHAGGY DOG

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 VENOM
4 ULTRAVIOLET

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
1 ICE AGE 2
2 NANNY McPHEE
3 VENOM
4 SHE'S THE MAN
5 JUST FRIENDS
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY MANILA
1 SHE'S THE MAN
2 ULTRAVIOLET
3 V FOR VENDETTA
4 ICE AGE 2
5 NANNY McPHEE
6 ICE AGE 2
7 VENOM
8 FINAL DESTINATION 3
9 MOMENTS OF LOVE
10 MOMENTS OF LOVE
11 16 BLOCKS
12 JUST FRIENDS

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 ICE AGE 2
2 ICE AGE 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 VENOM
5 SHE'S THE MAN
6 JUST FRIENDS
7 FINAL DESTINATION 3
8 NANNY McPHEE
9 ULTRAVIOLET

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 ICE AGE 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 VENOM

SM CITY SUCAT
1 VENOM
2 ICE AGE 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ULTRAVIOLET

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NORTH EDSA * SAN LAZARO * STA. ROSA * PAMPANGA * BAGUIO * VALENZUELA
MARILAO * MOLINO** BATANGAS * LUCENA * CEBU * DAVAO* CAGAYAN DE ORO
**Promo starts on April 15, 2006
MEDIA PARTNERS 96.3WRocK IFM 93.9

LUZON

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 FINAL DESTINATION 3
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 VENOM
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY MARILAO
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 CRY WOLF
3 ICE AGE 2
4 16 BLOCKS

SM CITY BACOOR
1 V FOR VENDETTA
2 SHE'S THE MAN
3 ICE AGE 2
4 NANNY McPHEE
5 ULTRAVIOLET
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE
7 VENOM
8 FINAL DESTINATION 3

SM CITY STA. ROSA
1 VENOM
2 THE DARK
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 VENOM
2 ICE AGE 2
3 SHE'S THE MAN
4 SHAGGY DOG
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY LUCENA
1 16 BLOCKS
2 ICE AGE 2
3 THE DARK
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY MOLINO
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 NANNY McPHEE
4 ULTRAVIOLET

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 SYRIANA
12:00FS / 12:10 MF / 02:30
04:50 / 07:10 / 09:10 LFS
09:30 LMF / 10:55 END
2 ICE AGE 2
11:20FS / 11:30 MF / 01:30
3:30 / 05:30
07:30 / 09:05 LFS
09:30 LMF / 10:55 END
3 VENOM
11:20FS / 11:30 MF / 01:10
02:50 / 04:20 / 06:10
07:50 / 09:15 LFS
09:30 LMF / 10:55 END
4 V FOR VENDETTA
5 HOUSE OF FURY
6 BREAKING NEWS
7 MOMENTS OF LOVE
8 CASANOVA

SM CITY ILOILO
1 GLORY ROAD
2 ICE AGE 2
3 ICE AGE 2
4 FINAL DESTINATION 3
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 SHAGGY DOG
7 RESERVED
8 V FOR VENDETTA

SM CITY DAVAO
1 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 VENOM
5 HOUSE OF FURY
6 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY CAGAYAN
1 ICE AGE 2
2 FINAL DESTINATION 3
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 VENOM

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE
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MOMENTS OF LOVE 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50	LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50	BASIC INSTINCT 2 1:50 / 4:30 / 7:10 / 9:50	GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
JUST FRIENDS 12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40 / 6:50 / 9:00	VENOM 1:40 / 3:40 / 5:40 / 7:40 / 9:40	ICE AGE 2 12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40 / 6:50 / 9:00 HOSTEL 7:35 / 9:40	ICE AGE 2 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
NANNY McPHEE 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 SHE'S THE MAN 1:40 / 4:20 / 7:00 / 9:40	V FOR VENDETTA 7:00 / 9:40	ULTRAVIOLET 12:40 / 2:50 / 5:00	ONLY P120 ADMISSION GLOBE PLATINUM P249/P299

AliMALL CINEMAS

1 MOMENTS OF LOVE 12:00 R3 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40	2 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN 12:00 R3 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40	3 BASIC INSTINCT 2 12:10 / 2:50 / 5:30 / 8:10
4 ICE AGE 2 12:15 R4 / 1:05 / 3:15 / 5:25 / 7:35	5 VENOM 12:40 / 2:40 / 4:40 / 6:40 / 8:40	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

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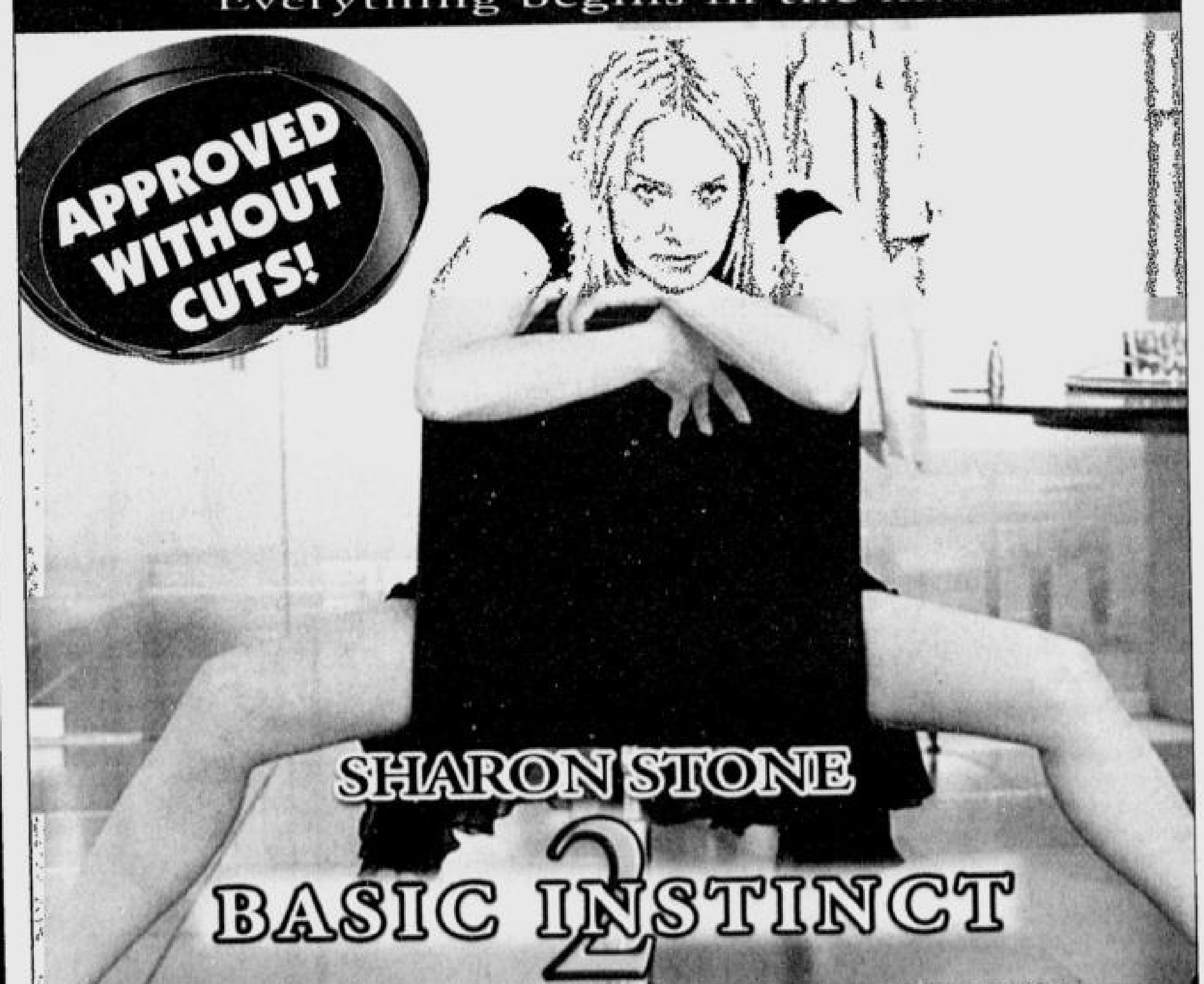
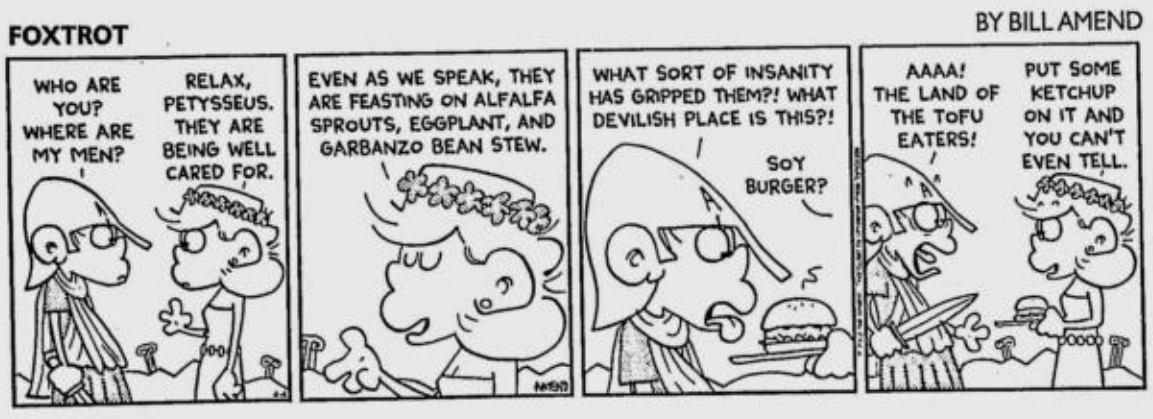
MTRCB RATING ▶ R-18 | Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted
SEDUCTION MANIPULATION PERVERSION
Everything begins in the mind.



FOXTROT
BY BILL AMEND



A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA

MARVIN
BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR

BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT

MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL

ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABALINAS

ALAM MONG TUMATANDA KA NA KUNG ..... HINDI MO NA NAKIKITANG NAGPO-POSE SA MGA MAGAZINES ANG PABORITO MONG SEXY STARLET

MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON

KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA

LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

HOROSCOPE
BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a lively, dynamic energy. You're extremely persevering, and you're not afraid to fight for what you want. You're very courageous, and you love to get involved in fresh activities. You seek a higher purpose in life. Increased solitude this year will help you learn something very valuable. The year 2007 will be a winner!
Birthdate of: Maya Angelou, poet; Heath Ledger, actor; Muddy Waters, legendary blues guitarist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You feel wonderful today. Basically, this is because you have faith in your future. You're ready to make a commitment to whatever you believe in. (This feels good!)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a wonderful day to share happy times with friends and groups. Any kind of group activity will be upbeat and enjoyable. People will follow your lead!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Today favors all forms of business and commercial activity. Talk to your boss or the head honcho. You'll be able to turn things to your best advantage now.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Travel plans and any activity connected with higher education, medicine or the law look fabulous today. Publishing is also favored. Sign up for a course. Think big!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a wonderful day for study and research. It's also a good day for discussions about insurance, estates, inheritances and shared property. You will do well!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You enjoy the company of others today. People are optimistic, and so are you. It's fun to bounce ideas off each other and encourage each other's dreams for the future.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your thinking is quite sharp today. Not only that, your optimism attracts others to you. It's easy to work with people today. Enjoy yourself!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a wonderful day for playful activities with children. It's a wonderful day for a vacation. It's a wonderful day for romance and love. Whatever you're doing—relax and enjoy yourself!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Family discussions are encouraging. In fact, whatever you do around the home today will please you. This is a particularly good day to discuss real estate possibilities.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is the perfect day to study any kind of subject. You're eager to learn, and you feel confident in your ability to do so.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): What a wonderful day for business and commerce! Trust your money-making ideas. Be careful about spending—you might go overboard. You're thinking like a winner today!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Because you have such a strong sense of the power of positive thinking today, you will actually attract good luck to you. Your mind will make it so. (This illustrates that what goes around comes around.)

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Damon Gulczynski
University Place, WA
4/4/06

ACROSS
1 Suppositions
4 Open __!
10 Does things
14 Bus. bigwig
15 Glib speech
16 Make small talk
17 Land of the free
18 Some arcade games
19 Zany Imogene
20 Norman Greenbaum hit
23 Decorate differently
24 Org. concerned with cryptology
25 An Astaire
26 Minneapolis suburb
28 Given sanctuary
30 Arrive via Greyhound
31 Volkswagen model
33 George Lucas hit
38 Truck renter
39 In existence
41 French or Monroe
45 Of quartz or feldspar
46 Make right
47 Sault __ Marie
50 "Venus de __"
51 Bruce Springsteen hit
55 Mexican moola
56 Tastelessly affected
57 Do one better than
59 Part of IBM
60 Existing naturally
61 Reef denizen
62 Comfort
63 Stone monuments
64 Like many a bad textbook

DOWN
1 Hosp. section
2 Came clean
3 Kline/Field movie
4 Train like Rocky
5 Dine at home
6 RBIs and such
7 Skylit courtyards
8 Chow or lo follower
9 Formerly, formerly
10 Give consent
11 Picked out
12 Fishing gear
13 Failed to leave
21 Region of Asia Minor
22 Certain cigars
23 Gray Johnny
27 Ring-shaped molding
28 Web page file letters
29 Goddess of folly
31 Rocker Jett
32 Aussie non-filer
34 Your, long ago
35 Texas landmark
36 With eyelashes
37 Baddie
40 System or friendly lead-in
41 Heckle or Jeckle
42 Goddess of wisdom
43 Sits on a perch
44 Shoe pad
47 Boulder
48 Wreck beyond repair
49 Behave theatrically
52 Mayberry boozer
53 Typeface
54 Regular guys
58 Layer

Monday's Puzzle Solved

M	O	L	E		R	E	R	E	A	D		R	I	O
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4/4/06

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for movie schedules, log on to www.clickthecity.com

SNOOKY: "Still friends"

Define 'deranged'— better yet, let's all move on

DOLLY WOOD
Dolly Ann Carvajal

THEY ALL WANTED TO INTERVIEW me—"The Buzz," "S Files," "Startalk" and "E.T.K"— regarding **Mila Ocampo**'s nasty statements about me. **Tita Mila** felt I was alluding to her and **Snooky** in a blind item I had written in this column a few weeks ago. I begged off from the interviews because I didn't see the point in dignifying Tita Mila's accusations by reacting to them. But even without my side of the story, the issue was tackled in "The Buzz" and "E.T.K." Hence I've been advised to say my piece here. Silence can no longer be my best defense. As a mother myself, I know where Tita Mila is coming from. But I didn't pinpoint her daughter. It could have been anybody. Why presume it was about Snooky? She said I was "deranged." Does that word describe somebody who has the good sense not to name names to avoid a potentially hurtful situation?

As for Snooky, she said on "E.T.K" last Saturday that she was not affected by the issue at all. In fact, she said she still considered me a friend. My mind suddenly went on flashback mode to the time when our boyfriends were brothers (**Albert** and **William Martinez**). Just like her, I lose my senses when I'm in love. If that's what Tita Mila meant by "deranged," then so be it. I admit being "crazy" in the *amour* department but I manage to keep my sanity intact amid the madness of this world called show biz. I'm a true child of the industry. This is where I grew up. I'd like to believe that the lessons I learned from an icon like my mom will forever be impenetrable shields that

DEFINE/ A2-3

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G1 GLORETTA 1	1 ULTRAVIOLET	2 MOMENTS OF LOVE	3 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	4 BASIC INSTINCT 2
G4 GLORETTA 4	1 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	2 MOMENTS OF LOVE	3 THX JUST FRIENDS 12.05, 2 10, 4 15, 6 20, 8 25, 10 30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 RENT	5 VENOM	6 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	7 BASIC INSTINCT 2
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 JUST FRIENDS		2 BASIC INSTINCT 2	
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS		2 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	3 BASIC INSTINCT 2 1:20, 3:54, 6:10, 8:35, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 RENT 1:10, 3:45, 6:20, 8:55, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 JUST FRIENDS 1:20 3:20, 5:20, 7:20 9:20, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN		2 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	
	3 JUST FRIENDS	4 MOMENTS OF LOVE	5 VENOM	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	2 BASIC INSTINCT 2	3 VENOM	4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 MOMENTS OF LOVE		2 VENOM	
	3 JUST FRIENDS	4 BASIC INSTINCT 2	5 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	

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AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
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GREENBELT — Ayala Museum Summer Workshop Sampler April 1, 2006 - Greenbelt 3 Park

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Longer term T-bill rates continue to slide

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BENCHMARK 91-DAY treasury bill rate inched up while longer term tenors eased further as banks swamped the government's weekly auction yesterday with a big appetite for the 182- and 364-day tenors.

As banking system remains very liquid

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the local market was still very liquid, especially with some P9.5 billion worth of treasury bills and bonds maturing this week.

Cruz said banks scrambled for the longer dated tenors that would give them the highest yields, reflecting confidence in improved fiscal and economic fundamentals.

The 91-day T-bill rate, used by banks as reference in setting their lending rates, averaged at 4.993 percent, slightly rising from 4.978 percent posted during the last auction.

The Bureau of Treasury awarded only P985 million out of P1.79 billion tenders drawn by the 91-day offering.

The average 182- and 362-day rates, however, eased to 5.741 percent and 6.49 percent, respectively, from last week's 5.935 percent and 6.750 percent.

Cruz noted that the market showed preference for the 364-day tenor, which was 7.6 times oversubscribed, while the 182-day securities were 4.4 times oversubscribed.

"This augurs well again for the market's view of where yields might go. Clearly, the preference for longer term tenors shows that they know very well our cash position is very comfortable and our fiscal position is very good; that's why we need to borrow less,"

LONGER/ B8

WHAT'S INSIDE

ODAs seen to exceed '06 target /B3

Bonds buyback to boost GIR /B8

Mirant seen staying in RP

By Abigail L. Ho

MIRANT PHILIPPINES CORP., THE COUNTRY's biggest independent power producer, is not likely to abandon its Philippine operations, at least for the meantime.

A well placed industry source said the IPP, amid speculations that it would sell its Philippine assets, would actually be staying in the country to fulfill its various commitments.

"They remain committed and continue to value their assets here. They also remain committed to implement all the commitments that they made in the past, including rural electrification," the source said, adding that Mirant was looking at providing electricity to 270 barangays this year.

What the power firm was doing right now, the source said, was restructuring its equity investments relative to debt.

The source explained that the company's 80:20 debt-to-equity ratio was expensive to maintain as equity cost more than debt.

"They're going to change that ratio so that they can rely more on cheaper debt. If they are successful in doing so, it will show that there is confidence in the ability of a corporation that operates in the Philippines to raise debt even in the international market," the source said.

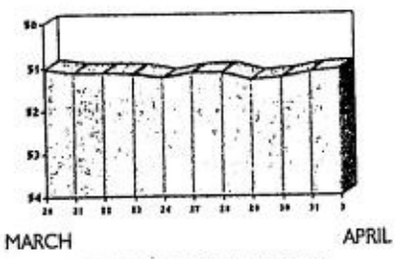
If the company could borrow a bit more, the source said Mirant would not only stay in the Philippines but possibly expand its asset base here.

Mirant could also bid for existing assets or build new merchant plants.

"They're still looking at the possibilities," the source said.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱51.08 = $1

As of 5 p.m., April 3, 2006

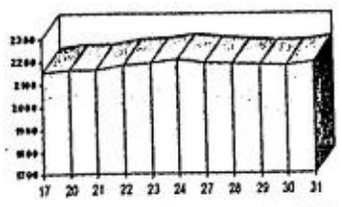
¥118.53 = $1

As of 5 p.m., April 3, 2006

GOLD: $585.20-585.70

per ounce Hong Kong, March 31, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B8)

Stocks close lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.28 PERCENT lower yesterday, continuing to slip back as investors took profits on recent gains, dealers said.

They said the market has entered a consolidation phase, with investors adjusting positions ahead of the Easter holiday break next week.

The composite index shed 6.18 points to 2,189.77 after trading between 2,183.20 and 2,197.27. Volume was 1.13 billion shares worth P945.67 million. Losers beat gainers 55 to 23, with 62 stocks unchanged.

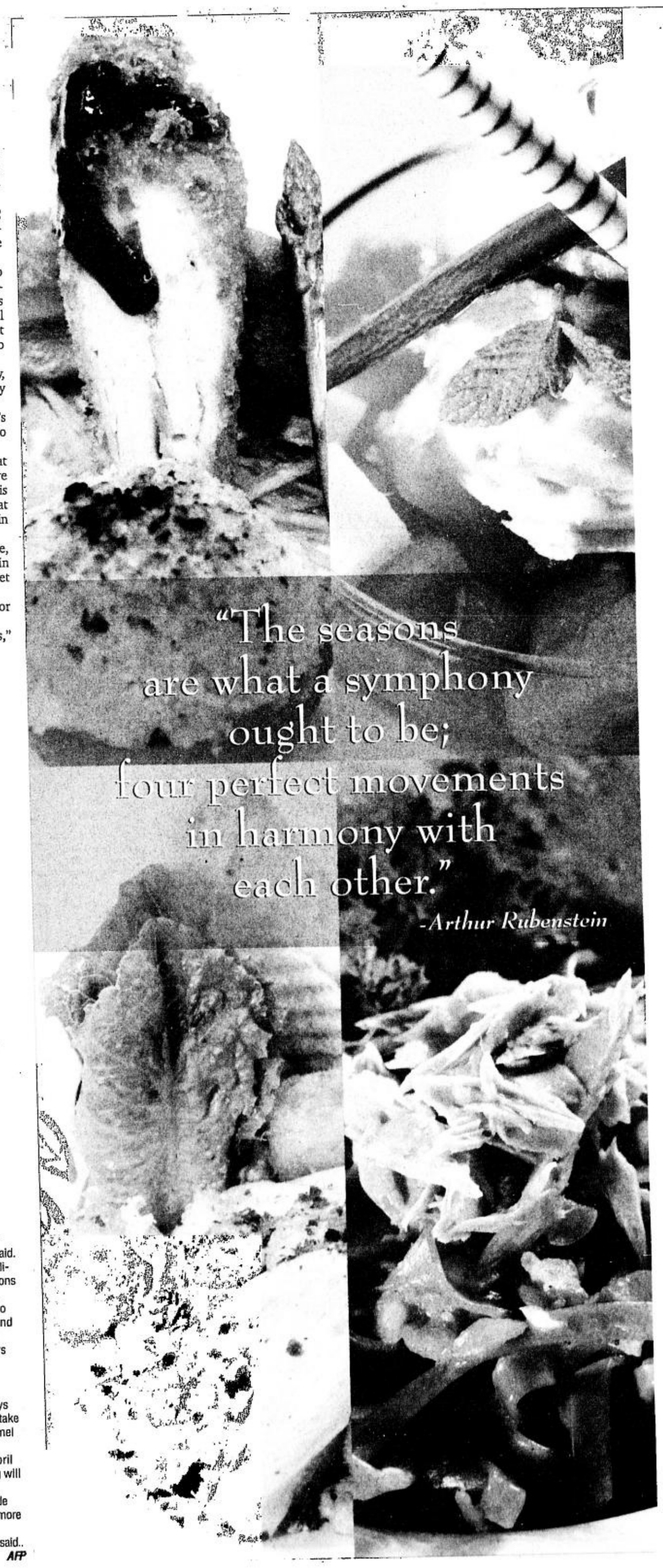
The all-shares index fell 1.65 points to 1,069.36.

While the Easter break is still several days away, "the mood this time of the year is to take cash and stay on the sidelines," said Rommel Macapagal of Westlink Global Equities.

Philippine markets will be closed on April 13 and 14 for the Easter holidays. Trading will resume on April 17.

Accord Capital Equities analyst Lawrence de Leon said that the market was "looking for a more stable base before resuming its upward trek.

"The overall sentiment is still positive," he said.. AFP



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GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING REMITTANCES AND DISBURSEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSAL CHARGE

(Revised as per ERC Order dated 5 January 2006)

WHEREAS, Section 34 of Republic Act No. 9136 otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001" (the "Act" or "EPIRA") provides that a Universal Charge to be determined, fixed and approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission ("ERC") shall be imposed on all End-Users for the following purposes:

1. Stranded Debts and Stranded Contract Costs of National Power Corporation ("NPC") in excess of the amount to be assumed by the Government of the Philippines;
2. Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities;
3. Missionary Electrification;
4. The equalization of the taxes and royalties applied to indigenous or renewable sources of energy vis-à-vis imported energy fuels;
5. An environmental charge equivalent to one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P0.0025/kWh), which shall accrue to an environmental fund to be used solely for watershed rehabilitation and management and shall be managed by NPC under existing arrangements; and
6. A charge to account for all forms of cross-subsidies for a period not exceeding three (3) years.

WHEREAS, Section 5 of Rule 18 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of EPIRA ("IRR") mandates that the Universal Charge shall be a non-by passable charge which shall be (1) collected from all End-Users on a monthly basis by the Distribution Utilities or Suppliers in case of a Contestable Market; or (2) remitted directly to the National Transmission Corporation ("Transco") or its Concessionaire by any End-Users or Self Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility.

WHEREAS, Section 7 of Rule 18 of the IRR provides that all Self-Generation Facilities whether new, existing or under construction shall not be covered by the imposition of Universal Charge for a period of four (4) years from its imposition: *Provided*, That, such Self-Generation Facilities shall register with the ERC and PSALM.

WHEREAS, Section 34 of the Act mandates PSALM to be the administrator of the Universal Charge funds and requires PSALM to establish Special Trust Funds ("STFs") for this purpose.

WHEREAS, there is a need to establish procedures for the remittance and disbursement of the Universal Charge and for the timely provision of accurate information in relation thereto, to ensure that the objectives of the Universal Charge are achieved and to enable PSALM to fulfill its obligations under the Act.

WHEREAS, Section 6 (b) of Rule 18 of the IRR requires PSALM, in consultation with the DOF and with the approval of the ERC, to promulgate procedures and guidelines to govern all remittances to and disbursements from the Special Trust Funds.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, PSALM promulgates these "Amended Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Remittances and Disbursements of the Universal Charge" as follows.

Section 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In compliance with the EPIRA and its IRR, these Guidelines are being issued by PSALM for:

(a) the remittance to the Special Trust Funds of the Universal Charge amounts collected or received by Distribution Utilities, Suppliers, and TRANSCO or its Concessionaire;
(b) the administration by PSALM of the STFs;
(c) the provision of information to PSALM so that it may comply with its obligations for the management of Universal Charge funds; and
(d) the disbursement of the Universal Charge by PSALM to the Beneficiaries in accordance with their entitlements as determined and approved by the ERC.

Section 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.01 Defined Terms: The following terms and expressions shall have the meanings set forth below:

"*Act*" or "*EPIRA*" refers to Republic Act No. 9136, otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001";

"*Beneficiaries*" means the entities eligible or authorized by the ERC to avail of the Universal Charge pursuant to EPIRA and its IRR as enumerated in Section 3.02 (*STFs and their Beneficiaries*);

"*BTr*" refers to the Bureau of Treasury;

"*Collecting Entities*" refers to (1) Distribution Utilities or Suppliers in case of Contestable Markets; and (2) TRANSCO or its Concessionaire in respect of End-Users and Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility;

"*Concessionaire*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR and, for the avoidance of doubt, references herein to TRANSCO shall apply equally to the Concessionaire once the Concessionaire has been appointed to assume TRANSCO's responsibilities;

"*Contestable Market*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Demand Draft*" refers to a check issued by a bank with guaranteed funding. This is negotiable only within provincial branches. This instrument is usually coded for security purposes;

"*Distribution Utility*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*DOE*" refers to the Department of Energy, the government agency created pursuant to Republic Act No. 7638 whose expanded functions are provided in the Act;

"*DOF*" refers to the Department of Finance, the government agency created pursuant to Executive Order No. 127;

"*End-User*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Energy Regulatory Commission*" or "*ERC*" refers to the regulatory agency created by Section 38 of the Act;

"*ERC Rules*" refers to the "ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge;

"*Government Financial Institution*" or "*GFI*" refers to financial institutions or corporations wholly owned and controlled by the National Government. For purposes of these Guidelines, the GFI must be acceptable to the DOF;

"*Guidelines*" refers to these "Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Remittances and Disbursements of the Universal Charge";

"*IRR*" refers to the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the EPIRA;

"*Main Trust Account – Universal Charge*" means the bank account established by PSALM either with the BTr or a GFI acceptable by the DOF, purposely and exclusively for receiving the remittance of the Universal Charge collections from the Collecting Entities;

"*Manager's/Cashier's Check*" refers to a check issued by a bank with guaranteed funding. This instrument must be negotiable within Metro Manila only;

"*Market Operator*" shall have the same meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Missionary Electrification*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*National Power Corporation*" or "*NPC*" refers to the government corporation created pursuant to Republic Act No. 6395, as amended

"*National Transmission Corporation*" or "*TRANSCO*" refers to the government corporation created pursuant to Section 8 of the EPIRA. References to TRANSCO in these Guidelines shall also be deemed as references to its Concessionaire;

"*Person*" refers to a natural or juridical person, as the case may be;

"*Petitioners*" refers to the Persons entitled to petition the ERC for availment of the Universal Charge as provided in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment);

"*Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation*" or "*PSALM*" refers to the government owned and controlled corporation created pursuant to Section 49 of the EPIRA;

"*Qualified Third Parties*" or "*QTPs*" refers to persons who meet the qualifications set by the DOE and who obtain the necessary permits from the ERC and any other agency as may be required to be an indirect beneficiary of a portion of the Universal Charge for Missionary Electrification;

"*Self-Generation Entity*" or "*Self-Generation Facility*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Small Power Utilities Group*" or "*SPUG*" refers to the functional unit of NPC created to pursue missionary electrification function;

"*Special Trust Fund*" or "*STF*" refers to a trust fund established by PSALM for each intended purpose of the Universal Charge and its corresponding Beneficiary or Beneficiaries as enumerated in Section 3.02 (*STFs and their Beneficiaries*);

"*STF Account*" means an account opened by PSALM either with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF, purposely and exclusively for remittances to or disbursements of the Universal Charge;

"*Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities*" has the same meaning as "Stranded Contract Costs of Eligible Contracts of Distribution Utilities" as defined in the IRR;

"*Stranded Contract Costs of NPC*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Stranded Debts of NPC*" or "*Stranded Debts*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Supplier*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Universal Charge*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR.

"*WESM Rules*" shall refer to the rules governing the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market ("WESM"), promulgated by the DOE in its Department Circular No. 2002-06-003, dated 28 June 2002;

"*Wholesale Electricity Spot Market*" or "*WESM*" refers to the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market to be created in accordance with RA 9136.

2.02 Rules of Construction: Unless the context otherwise requires:

(a) Words singular and plural in number shall be deemed to include the other;
(b) Section headings are for convenience of reference only, do not form part of these Guidelines, and shall not be deemed to limit or otherwise affect any of the provisions hereof. References to Sections, unless otherwise indicated, are references to sections of these Guidelines;
(c) In the event that any of the capitalized terms above are defined through reference to the EPIRA and its IRR, in the event of a conflict, the EPIRA definition shall govern; and
(d) In the event that any of the capitalized terms above are defined through reference to the EPIRA and its IRR and such definition appears only in the EPIRA or the IRR, the term is deemed to have been defined by the document wherein the definition of such term appears.

The applicable laws, including the EPIRA, its IRR and other applicable government regulations, are incorporated herein by reference.

Section 3: COVERAGE

3.01 Petitioners for Availment: The following are entitled to petition the ERC for availment of the Universal Charge for each of the intended purposes:

(1) PSALM for Stranded Debt and Stranded Contract Costs of NPC;
(2) Distribution Utilities with respect to their respective Stranded Contract Costs;
(3) SPUG, for Missionary Electrification;
(4) Generation companies with respect to the equalization of taxes and royalties between indigenous or renewable energy resources and imported fuels;
(5) NPC with respect to the environmental charge of one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P 0.0025/kWh) of sales; and
(6) NPC/PSALM and Distribution Utilities with respect to the mitigation of the removal of cross subsidies.

3.02 STFs and their Beneficiaries: These Guidelines cover the following STFs to be established by PSALM, as provided in Section 4.02 (The STFs), for each intended purpose identified in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment), and their respective beneficiaries:

(1) Stranded Debts and Stranded Contract Costs of NPC for PSALM;
(2) Stranded Contract Costs for Distribution Utilities as authorized by the ERC;
(3) Missionary Electrification for SPUG;
(4) Equalization of taxes and royalties between indigenous or renewable energy resources and imported fuels for generation companies so authorized by the ERC;
(5) Environmental charge of one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P 0.0025/kWh) of sales for NPC; and
(6) Mitigation of the removal of cross-subsidies for NPC/PSALM and Distribution Utilities.

The Petitioners shall be deemed the Beneficiaries with respect to their corresponding STFs only upon and to the extent of the approval by the ERC of their petition for availment of the Universal Charge.

3.03 Collecting Entities: These Guidelines apply to the following entities mandated by the Act to collect or receive the Universal Charge, as set out in the ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge:

(1) Distribution Utilities collecting from End-Users in the captive market;
(2) Suppliers collecting from End-Users in a contestable market;
(3) TRANSCO or its Concessionaire collecting the amounts remitted by End-Users and Self-Generation Entities which are not connected to a Distribution System.

Section 4: CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

4.01 The Main Trust Account – Universal Charge

(a) PSALM shall open one (1) Trust account, referred to as the "Main Trust Account – Universal Charge", with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF. Collecting Entities shall deposit their collections of the Universal Charge in the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge.
(b) Within ten (10) business days of the approval of these Guidelines by the ERC, PSALM shall provide the Collecting Entities with the bank details and account number of the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge.
(c) If there are any amendments to the bank details and account number of the Main Trust Account-Universal Charge, PSALM shall notify all of the Collecting Entities as soon as possible but in any case within ten (10) business days from the effectivity of such amendments.

4.02 The STFs

(a) Pursuant to Section 6(a) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall create one (1) separate STF for each of the six (6) intended purposes enumerated in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment). These STFs shall be established with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF.
(b) PSALM will make disbursements of the Universal Charge to the respective Beneficiaries from these six (6) STFs.
(c) PSALM will enter into an appropriate agreement with the BTr or GFI detailing the terms for the maintenance of the STFs and the transfers of funds to and from the STFs. The terms of the agreement shall be consistent with the specific purposes for which the STFs were created in accordance with existing laws, government rules and regulations.
(d) Amounts remitted to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge will be allocated to the six (6) STFs pursuant to Section 7(c).
(e) Any interest earned on monies in an STF Account shall form part of such STF and shall be used for the same specified purpose.
(f) The charges, expenses, fees and other costs imposed by the GFI or BTr for the administration of the STFs shall be monitored and accounted for by PSALM. The charges, expenses, fees and other costs shall be debited to each of the STFs *pro rata* to the amount of money passing through each STF.

Section 5: REMITTANCE OF UNIVERSAL CHARGE BY COLLECTING ENTITIES

5.01 Remittance Procedures: To avoid the penalties and unnecessary costs brought about by a delay in the remittance of the Universal Charge, the Collecting Entities shall faithfully comply with the procedures set forth below:

(a) Subject to Section 5.03 ("*Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge*"), each Collecting Entity shall remit its total actual collections of the Universal Charge to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge without need of prior demand from PSALM.
(b) The Universal Charge amounts collected during each calendar month shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour of the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month. In the event that the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month falls on a non-banking day or holiday, all Universal Charge collections shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour on the immediately succeeding banking day.
(c) *For proper control and timely recording, each Collecting Entity shall submit to PSALM all the necessary information pertaining to billing of the Universal Charge for the calendar month as required under Section 6 ("Provision of Information") on the twentieth (20th) day of the succeeding calendar month. Similarly, information on collection and remittance of Universal Charge for the calendar month as required under Section 6 ("Provision of Information") shall be submitted to PSALM on the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding calendar month, to coincide with the date of remittance.*
(d) All remittances of the Universal Charge shall be in Philippines Pesos and shall be made through any one of the following forms, in each case clearly identifying the Collecting Entity and the billing and collection month to which the remittance pertains:
    (1) Cash
    (2) Manager's/Cashier's Check
    (3) Demand Draft
    (4) Fund Transfer
    (5) Company Check
(e) PSALM shall confirm with the BTr or GFI the amount of the Universal Charge remitted to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge by each Collecting Entity in each month. PSALM shall issue a confirmation notice to each Collecting Entity within five (5) business days confirming the receipt of its funds in the Main Trust Account-Universal Charge.

5.02 Late Remittances: Subject to Section 5.03 ("*Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge*"), failure of a Collecting Entity to remit without justifiable or valid reason its total actual collections of the Universal Charge in each calendar month in accordance with Section 5.01 ("*Remittance Procedures*") shall subject such Collecting Entity to a late remittance interest charge and the fines and penalties provided in Section 8 of Rule 18 of the IRR. The procedures for late remittances are as follows:

(a) In the event that any Collecting Entity collects amounts from End-Users in respect of the Universal Charge in any calendar month but fails to remit the same to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour of the fifteenth (15th) day of the next calendar month, said Collecting Entity shall pay a late remittance interest charge on the amount collected and due but not remitted. The late remittance interest charge shall be applied to the difference between total actual collections of the Universal Charge for any calendar month and total actual remittances for said month, and will be calculated at the rate of five percent (5%) per month from the date upon which the remittance amount was due until the date when such amount is received in the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge.
(b) The late remittance interest charge shall be in addition to whatever amount of fine or penalty may be imposed by the ERC under Section 8 of Rule 18 of the IRR.
(c) Any late remittance interest charges shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge for disbursement to the STFs pro rata to the allocation of other remittances between the STFs.
(d) PSALM reserves the right to withhold any due disbursements of the Universal Charge to a Collecting Entity which has failed to remit its collections to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge or require the Collecting Entity to pay the late remittance interest charges in accordance with the procedures described herein.
(e) In the event that any Collecting Entity consistently delays in or fails to remit its Universal Charge collections for more than two (2) months, PSALM shall request the ERC to take appropriate action under Rule 18 of the IRR.

5.03 Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge: A Collecting Entity which is a Distribution Utility authorized by the ERC to avail of the Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities in any calendar month is entitled to withhold from its remittance to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge an amount reflecting the Universal Charge approved by the ERC for such purpose for the relevant month, in accordance with the procedure provided in this Section:

(a) In determining the amount which a Distribution Utility can net off from its remittance of the Universal Charge to PSALM, the Distribution Utility shall not discriminate in its own favor at the expense of other beneficiaries in the event that actual collections differ from expected collections based on the level of kilowatt-hour sales used by ERC in setting the Universal Charge per kilowatt-hour (kWh). In such case, the Distribution Utility shall only retain its proportionate share in the actual collection.
(b) For the avoidance of doubt, a Distribution Utility must remit to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge the amounts of Universal Charge collected from its End-Users pertaining to the other categories of Universal Charge. The balance of a Distribution Utility's entitlement to Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities for any month will be disbursed to said Distribution Utility by PSALM from the Universal Charge amounts collected for that purpose by other Collecting Entities, in accordance with Section 7 ("*Disbursements from the STFs*").
(c) Under no circumstances may a Distribution Utility withhold from its remittances to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge in respect of any month such amount in excess of that which the ERC has authorized said Distribution Utility to recover from the Universal Charge for its Stranded Contract Costs for that month.

Section 6: PROVISION OF INFORMATION

6.01 Reporting Requirements and Procedures

(a) In order for PSALM to monitor the proper remittance of Universal Charge collections by Collecting Entities for the protection of all End-Users, each Collecting Entity must furnish PSALM with relevant information on its billings and collections in each calendar month. The Market Operator is also required to submit information as set out in Section 6.04 so that PSALM may verify the information provided by Collecting Entities.
(b) *The statements or information described in Sections 6.02 through 6.03 pertaining to billings in respect of each calendar month should be submitted to PSALM (by electronic mail or facsimile transmission) by each Collecting Entity to arrive on or before the twentieth (20th) day of the succeeding month. Likewise, information pertaining to monthly collections and remittances should be submitted to PSALM (by electronic mail or facsimile transmission) by each Collecting Entity to arrive on or before the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month.* For documents sent by electronic mail or facsimile transmission, the original of said statement or report must be provided to PSALM within ten (10) business days from the remittance of the Universal Charge.

6.02 Reports by Distribution Utilities and Suppliers: In respect of each calendar month, each Collecting Entity that is a Distribution Utility or Supplier shall submit to PSALM:

(a) A certified statement of its total actual billings of electricity separately identifying the total amount billed in respect of each Universal Charge component. Such statement shall include the total actual sales of electricity in kWh. The form for the Universal Charge Total Actual Billings Statement and sample calculations are attached hereto as Annex A1 and A2, respectively.

    Billing adjustments due to erroneous meter reading, or arithmetical mistakes or omissions shall be reflected in the Universal Charge Billing Form, duly supported by a certified true copy of the debit or credit memo issued by the Collecting Entity to the concerned customer.

    Billing adjustments covering bad debts written off shall likewise be reflected in the Universal Charge Billing Form, duly supported by documents.
(b) A certified statement of its total actual collections separately identifying the amount collected for each Universal Charge component. The form for the Universal Charge Total Actual Collections and sample calculations are attached hereto as Annex B1 and B2, respectively.
(c) The statements identified in Sections 6.02(a) and 6.02(b) must be signed by the Chief Financial Officer or his equivalent or any authorized representative of such Collecting Entity.
(d) A Collecting Entity which is a Distribution Utility authorized by the ERC to collect an amount of Universal Charge in respect of its own Stranded Contract Cost must identify in its statement under Section 6.02(a) the amount which it is authorized by the ERC to avail from the Universal Charge for this purpose in the relevant calendar month and the amount which it has billed to its End-Users for this purpose in the relevant calendar month. In its statement under Section 6.02(b), said Distribution Utility shall identify separately the amount collected from its End-Users for this purpose and the amount withheld from its remittance to the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge under Section 5.03 ("*Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge*").

6.03 Reports by TRANSCO

(a) TRANSCO shall submit the statements described in Section 6.02 ("*Reports by Distribution Utilities and Suppliers*") in respect of its invoices to and collections from End-Users which are connected to the transmission system and not connected to a distribution system. In case TRANSCO does not meter and/or invoice any such End-Users on the basis of kilowatt hours of sales, TRANSCO will include in its statement under Section 6.02(a) the basis on which it has estimated the kilowatt hours consumed by such End-Users in determining the Universal Charge amounts which it has invoiced.
(b) In respect of amounts remitted to TRANSCO (or its Concessionaire, as the case may be) by Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility, TRANSCO shall submit to PSALM a copy of the information which has been provided to TRANSCO by the Self-Generation Entities in support of their remittances. TRANSCO may summarize such information in the event that it is voluminous.

6.04 Reports by Market Operator: No later than the fifteenth (15th) day of each calendar month, the Market Operator shall submit to PSALM a summary of its actual meter readings in kilowatt hours for the immediately preceding calendar month separately identifying each metering point and the corresponding Distribution Utility, Supplier or End-User connected to the transmission system.

6.05 Reports by NPC-SPUG: No later than the twentieth (20th) day of each calendar month, the National Power Corporation – Strategic Power Utilities Group (NPC-SPUG) shall submit to PSALM a summary of its actual meter readings in kilowatt hours for the immediately preceding calendar month separately identifying each metering point and the corresponding Distribution Utility, supplier or End-User in the SPUG area.

Section 7: DISBURSEMENTS FROM THE STFs

(a) The STFs shall be disbursed only for the specific purposes for which the same were created in accordance with existing laws, government rules and regulations.
(b) The STFs shall be disbursed and accounted for in accordance with the fundamental requirements for disbursement of trust funds as provided for under applicable law, including the Government Auditing Code of the Philippines (Presidential Decree 1445) and the Government Accounting and Auditing Manual promulgated by the Commission on Audit.
(c) The BTr or GFI shall distribute all the funds received in the Main Trust Account – Universal Charge to the STFs based on instructions issued by PSALM no later than the 19th day of each calendar month (or, if this is a non-banking day or holiday, the next succeeding business day) reflecting the Beneficiaries' proportionate entitlements to avail of the Universal Charge.
(d) To facilitate close monitoring of disbursements from the STFs and their use for the intended purpose:
    (1) Each Beneficiary shall promptly furnish PSALM with a certified true copy of the order (or other relevant ruling) issued by the ERC setting out the Beneficiary's entitlement to the Universal Charge in respect of each year or each calendar month, as the case may be.
    (2) In respect of each calendar month and consistent with the information provided under Section 7(d)(1), each Beneficiary shall properly complete and certify the Universal Charge Disbursement Request Form as found in Annex C and submit the same to PSALM on or before the seventeenth (17th) day of the next calendar month.
    (3) PSALM will make no disbursement to any Beneficiary from any of the STF Accounts unless the Universal Charge Disbursement Request Form is accomplished in all respects and has been presented to the satisfaction of PSALM on or before the seventeenth (17th) day of the next calendar month.
    (4) Subject to Section 7(d)(4) and Section 7(f), PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse funds from the relevant STF Account to the Beneficiary on the twentieth (20th) day of each month (or, if this is a non-banking day or holiday, the next succeeding business day), either through funds transfer or Manager's Check. In case of payment by Manager's Check, the Beneficiary's authorized representative shall have to appear at the PSALM offices with all relevant documents to demonstrate such authority to claim the Manager's Check.
    (5) Within five (5) calendar days from its receipt of the funds so disbursed, each Beneficiary must issue an official receipt in favor of PSALM. PSALM reserves the right to make no further disbursements to any Beneficiary until it has issued such official receipt for the disbursement.
(e) In the event that the balance in any STF Account for any calendar month exceeds the amount of the availment request or requests submitted by the Beneficiary or Beneficiaries of such account for such month, PSALM shall retain the balance within the STF Accounts to pay for periods where a shortfall occurs.
(f) In the event that the balance in any STF Account for any calendar month falls short of the Universal Charge availment request submitted by the Beneficiary of such account for such month, PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse only such amount not exceeding that which is in the STF Account. In the event that there are multiple Beneficiaries of any such STF Account, PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse the balance available in the account between the Beneficiaries *pro rata* to the Beneficiaries' availment requests for that month. The Beneficiary or Beneficiaries shall be entitled to recover any such shortfall in a later month in accordance with the true-up mechanism approved by the ERC for the relevant Universal Charge purpose.
(g) Nothing in these Guidelines shall restrict the right of NPC (SPUG) to disburse a portion of the Missionary Electrification component of the Universal Charge to QTPs provided such disbursement is in accordance with law and with the approval of the DOE and ERC.

Section 8: AUDIT AND REPORTING

(a) Acting in its capacity as administrator of the STF Accounts, PSALM shall:
    (1) Maintain monthly records of each component of Universal Charge billings, collections, remittances and disbursements.
    (2) Reconcile each component of Universal Charge billings, collections, and remittances with the books of accounts of Collecting Entities.
    (3) Maintain records of Universal Charge availments due and paid to each of the Beneficiaries in each month, including separate books of accounts for over-recovery of the Distribution Utility stranded cost component.
    (4) Reconcile Universal Charge availments due and paid to each of the Beneficiaries with the books of accounts of Beneficiaries on a monthly basis.
    (5) Whenever requested by the ERC, inform the ERC of the outstanding balance of each of the STF.
(b) As required by Section 6 (d) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall submit to the DOF and ERC on a quarterly basis a report on the remittances and disbursements of the STFs.
(c) As required by Section 3 (f) of Rule 13 of the IRR, PSALM shall ensure that SPUG conducts proper monitoring, accounting and control of expenditures and efficient utilization of the Missionary Electrification funds from the Universal Charge. SPUG shall submit to PSALM a detailed yearly report containing:
    (1) Historical actual Operating Costs separately identifying expenditures on fuel, lubricants, purchased power, personal services, and other operating and maintenance expenses for the prior year and projected Operating Costs for the same categories for the current year and the next succeeding two years.
    (2) Historical actual Capital Expenditures for expansion, rehabilitation and installation of facilities for new areas of development based on the approved MEDP for the prior year and projected Capital Expenditures for the same categories for the current year and the next succeeding two years.
(d) As required by Section 5 (b) of Rule 18 of the IRR, each Collecting Entity shall maintain separate books of accounts for the collections and remittances to PSALM of the Universal Charge. Such books of accounts must be made available to the ERC and PSALM during business hours upon two (2) days prior written notice.
(e) As required by Section 6 (e) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall maintain separate books of accounts for the disbursements to Distribution Utilities of the Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities and shall use the same to determine whether there has been any over-recovery by any Distribution Utility. PSALM will make such books of accounts available to the ERC for purposes of monitoring and accounting for sums collected from the Universal Charge.
(f) Each Collecting Entity shall submit to PSALM a yearly audited report of total actual collections and total actual remittances of the Universal Charge.
(g) In the event that PSALM discovers any discrepancy between expected and actual

(Continued on page 84)

ODAs seen to exceed '06 target

Int'l donor community now more confident in RP

By Doris C. Dumlao

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE INflows to the Philippines this year may reach more than twice the $800 million programmed for this year on improved global donors' confidence in the country.

Government sources privy to the Philippine Development Forum with multilateral and bilateral donors last week said the World Bank, for one, had committed to provide a $450-million "fiscal strengthening" program loan this year.

This would be on top of a $200-million loan intended for the health sector and another $100 million for the education sector, government sources said.

The additional commitments from the World Bank would bring up total ODA inflows this year to $1.55 billion.

With the increased ODA funding, a source from the Department of Finance said it was possible that the national government would rethink its plan to raise its remaining funding requirement worth $900 million from the offshore bond market.

The expected $450 million in inflows from the World Bank's fiscal strengthening program loan, a source said, could even be increased further if provided with co-financing by another donor, which could be the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

"The fiscal strengthening loan is given to countries that do well in their respective fiscal adjustment programs," the source said.

The source said the Philippines could have benefited from the $250-million in annual fiscal adjustment loan from the World Bank yearly in the past but the multilateral lender was concerned about the government's capability to repay the loan.

With the upbeat mood on the Philippines' fiscal consolidation efforts, the sources said the World Bank was now very much willing to extend large-scale program lending to the country.

But unlike in the PDF meeting in 2005, when many multilateral and bilateral lenders were hesitant to commit large-scale program lending to the country, WB country director and PDF co-chair Joachim von Amberg said the international donor community was now very optimistic on the Philippines.

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Prudentialife and Gawad Kalinga: Fostering Hope, Enriching Lives

Since 1978, Prudentialife has worked with various institutions through the Prudentialife Foundation, Inc. reaching out to less privileged sectors of society. Every year, Prudentialife shares its blessings with the orphans, prisoners, elderly, poor parishes and others. In 2004, Prudentialife forged a partnership with Gawad Kalinga to provide decent housing to poverty-stricken areas. Prudentialife is the first pre-need company to partner with Gawad Kalinga to provide free housing for 48 families through the Prudentialife-GK Village project in Baseco, Tondo, Manila. Prudentialife employees and sales force personally contribute to the needs of these families to enrich their lives and fulfill their dreams for a better future.

"Sibol ng Pangarap, Sibol ng Pag-asa"

To complement Prudentialife's endeavor in the GK shelter program, its Foundation is giving its all out support by donating two houses which have been converted to nursery SIBOL school for children at at the village. SIBOL is Gawad Kalinga's early childhood education program which stems from a vision to provide quality pre-school education for the poorest of the poor. This is GK's first step in breaking the cycle of poverty through a strong integrated value-based curriculum that raises the dignity, creativity and potential of Filipino children. As the school year ends, GK is proud to have been able to open almost 300 SIBOL schools around the country and educating close to 15,000 children.

As Gawad Kalinga moves forward to the next challenging phase to deliver its promise to more communities and more children, it is holding the SIBOL SUMMIT "Sibol ng Pangarap, Sibol ng Pag-asa" (The Beginning of Dreams, The Beginning of Hope). The event showcases the powerful role education plays in nation-building as Gawad Kalinga will also honor corporate, university, and individual partners who share the vision of SIBOL. Likewise, the event will launch the GK Bayaning Guro Award which is part of a more integrated education program - the Gawad Kalinga PAGASA.

GK PAGASA Program

Gawad Kalinga continues to transform lives with the cooperation of the CFC Educational Foundation, Inc. and Prudentialife. Together, they are launching GK-PAGASA which stands for PAaral Bahay Karunungan, GAwad Bayaning Guro and SAgip Balik-Eskwela to help build a bright future for the Filipino children through values-oriented educational programs. GK-PAGASA will spearhead 3 major projects: a community pre-school program to develop children (age 3-6) and basic literacy for out of school youth (age 15 and above) as well as recognize deserving SIBOL Teachers from GK Villages nationwide. The Prudentialife JATA-SIBOL School at the Prudentialife Village in Baseco, Tondo, Manila will serve as the pilot center for the GK PAGASA program.

SIBOL NG PANGARAP, SIBOL NG PAG-ASA

GK PAGASA organizers (from left) CFC-EFI President Naomi A. David, Prudentialife President Jose Alberto T. Alba and GK Executive Director Antonio E. Meloto with school children at the Prudentialife Village in Baseco, Tondo, Manila.

GAWAD KALINGA PAGASA

Gawad Kalinga continues to foster hope and enrich lives with the cooperation of the Couples for Christ-Educational Foundation, Inc. and Prudentialife as the first corparate partner. Together, they are launching GK PAGASA to help build a bright future for the Filipino family specially the children and the youth through values-oriented educational programs.

PAARAL-BAHAY KARUNUNGAN (PBK)

A Reading Center at the heart of the community where people can read, borrow/return books, host book clubs, receive training from reading/literacy specialists. It also serves as a venue for one to one sessions on basic literacy and Non Formal Education especially children (ages 3-6).

GAWAD BAYANING GURO (GBG)

The SIBOL teachers in each village are the unsung heroes behind the pre-school program. GK PAGASA recognizes the efforts of the top 10 excellent SIBOL teachers by documenting their work with the children as well as the motivations and spirit behind the work that they do.

SAGIP BALIK ESKWELA (SBE)

To address the needs of the growing number of out-of-school youth (15 & above), Couples for Christ-Educational Foundation, Inc. aims to help adults through an literacy program that gives elementary and secondary certification to adults which is equivalent to an elementary and high school diploma.

COUPLES FOR CHRIST
GAWAD KALINGA
Prudentialife

From drugs to riches

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

THE US-BASED DRUG COMPANY PFIZER IS trying hard to show that it really, er, "cares" for the people in this country, with only some 15 million living in extreme poverty.

Pfizer is the world's biggest drug company, and it just gave us a high profile show of concern, doing an incredible PR campaign.

In its praise, *este*, press release, the local office of Pfizer unabashedly stated that it conducted free medical examinations and consultation for the employees in Congress.

Again, that's Congress—the heart of political power in this country!

Whether or not Pfizer gave the free checkups so that the employees in Congress would buy more expensive Pfizer medicine, is hard to say.

Still, the multinational drug company's "wellness program" in Congress may do well to prevent a congressional investigation of its wickedness in this country.

For the information of our brave congresspersons, Pfizer sued Philippine International Trading Corp., or the PITC, and the Bureau of Food and Drugs, or the BFD, over a certain drug.

It is called Norvasc, used for the treatment of hypertension, sold here at P44.75 per 5-mg tablet.

Pfizer sells the same medicine in India under a different brand name, which is Amlogard, for an equivalent of P5.98 per tablet.

That makes the drug only about 650 percent more expensive here.

And that's why this cute administration of Gloriaetta wanted PITC to do what it called "parallel importation" of the exact same medicine.

Other countries—all rich by the way, like Japan and those in the European Union—are resorting to "parallel importation" to lower the prices of medicine.

A recent survey showed that 22 percent of Filipino adults have hypertension. Millions of Filipinos need to take the medicine—rich and poor alike.

Now, the Pfizer patent for the drug will expire in June next year.

Unfortunately it will take PITC some 18 months to get all the permits and such for the "parallel importation." This early, therefore, PITC is already asking the BFD to start the process. By June next year, or as soon as the patent expires, the "parallel importation" can begin. IMMEDIATELY.

But then, when Pfizer sued PITC and BFD, it asked the court for a TRO against whatever preparation they are doing for the eventual "parallel importation."

In other words, Pfizer wants to enjoy its monopoly on the hypertension drug for 18 more months, during which Pfizer can expect to sell something like P2.39 billion, for an estimated profit of P2.1 billion.

That's definitely not bad for 18 months of bleeding dry the poor people of this country, even considering the "expense" of the TRO, plus the PR campaign in Congress.

* * *

THIS may sound funny to you, but it is not funny at all to the company in our story.

The company is called National Life Insurance Co. It is asking the Court of Appeals to order the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the SEC, to enforce a ruling of the SEC itself, which was already affirmed by the Court of Appeals.

Did you get that?

Minus the legal jumble, anyway, all that National Life wanted was to force a company called Cemco Holdings to follow the SEC rule on "mandatory tender offer." The offer involves another company called Union Cement. Cemco took control of the company by buying out the majority stockholders, primarily Bacnotan Consolidated Industries, which was in turn owned by the Phinma group.

It so happened that National Life was one of the minority stockholders that were left out in the deal.

Under the SEC mandatory tender offer rule, Cemco must make an offer to buy the shares of National Life in Union Cement, at the same price that Cemco bought out the majority stockholders.

That, precisely, the SEC ordered Cemco to do—way back February last year, or more than a year ago.

But then Cemco went to the Court of Appeals. After more than a year, the court ruled that the SEC ruling was correct after all. (The ruling was made by Associate Justices Mario Guarina III, Rebecca de Guia-Salvador and Arturo Tayag.)

That's why National Life is asking the court to order the SEC to enforce the SEC's own ruling that was already affirmed by the same court.

There's nothing you can do about it, you see,

BREAKTIME/ B8

Interest in Transco still keen, says exec

By Abigail L. Ho

SEVERAL FOREIGN FIRMS CONtinue to look at the 25-year National Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession even if the bidding for this asset has been delayed for almost three years.

"All of them would have to be Filipino firms, but they do have foreign partners, including a Canadian firm and some American firms. The British, who have left before, are now reconsidering," said Nieves Osorio, president of Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

Singapore Power, the lone bidder in the two failed auctions held in 2003, had already decided not to join the race, she said, although the company was considering becoming a technical partner.

As for the auction date, she said PSALM had its internal target, which the state privatization body would rather keep under wraps at this time.

PSALM has prepared three options for the privatization of Transco, including an 85-15 scheme that will have the state firm retain a 15-percent equity in the national transmission grid.

Osorio explained that under this scheme, 85 percent of the Transco concession would be owned by the winning concessionaire, while the balance would remain with Transco.

Based on the original bid terms, Transco's privatization will be done in two phases.

For the pre-franchise phase, the concessionaire will perform only functions that can be delegated to it without a franchise. In the second phase, which already involves a franchise, the concessionaire will perform all functions related to the operation and management of the nationwide transmission grid.

"That's one option, but we are considering the views of the (Joint Congressional Power Commission) and we have two other options," Osorio said.

The remaining two options, she said, would only be disclosed "after we have consulted our investors and stakeholders."

One other thing that PSALM was awaiting before announcing a concrete auction date was the Energy Regulatory Commission's ap-

INTEREST/ B8

(From page B2)

collections, or between actual collections and actual remittances, or any other indication that a Collecting Entity is failing to comply with these Guidelines, PSALM shall have the right to seek an explanation from such Collecting Entity or to refer the matter to the ERC for investigation.

Section 9: LIABILITY

(a) PSALM shall not be held liable by any third party, including the beneficiaries of the STFs, for any non-remittance or partial remittance should the same be attributable to the fault or negligence of any of the Collecting Entities or any of its officers, employees, agents or assigns or any other party. Any Collecting Entity who is found by final judgement to be at fault shall immediately reimburse PSALM within five (5) days from demand of any amount expended by PSALM as payment for damages, expenses and other costs, incurred and paid pursuant to any settlement or legal proceedings, whether in the nature of administrative, civil or criminal, whenever PSALM is included as a party to any proceeding due to the fault or negligence of any Collecting Entity, its officers, employees, agents or assigns.

(b) In accordance with the EPIRA, the IRR and the ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge, the ERC may impose sanctions on any Collecting Entity for its failure to comply with these Guidelines or any portion thereof.

Section 10: FINES AND PENALTIES

The ERC may impose the appropriate fines and penalties for any violation or non-compliance with these Guidelines as provided in Section 5 of the Guidelines to Govern the Imposition of Administrative Sanctions in the form of Fines and Penalties Pursuant to Section 46 of RA 9136 dated May 17, 2002.

Section 11: AMENDMENTS

Any amendment to, or revision of these Guidelines may be proposed by PSALM, in consultation with the DOF and subject to the approval of the ERC.

Section 12: SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

Should any provision or section of these Guidelines be declared unconstitutional or contrary to law, the parts not so declared shall remain in full force and effect.

Done in the City of Makati this 16th day of January 2006.

(Sgd.) NIEVES L. OSORIO
President and CEO
PSALM Corporation

Approved by : Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC)
Order dated 5 January 2006
ERC Case No. 2003-187

ANNEX A1

Universal Charge Billing — UC Form No.

Billing entity	Date prepared
Address	Billing cycle
Total actual energy sales (in KWH)	

Universal charge billed	(in pesos)
UC 1 - Stranded debts & stranded contract costs of NPC	
UC 2 - Stranded contract costs of distribution utilities (DUs)	
UC 3 - Missionary electrification	
UC 4 - Equalization of taxes & royalties	
UC 5 - Rehabilitation & maintenance of watersheds	
UC 6 - Removal of cross-subsidies	
Total	
DU entitlement from UC for DU's stranded contract costs (in pesos)	

(Please indicate date signed)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Prepared by			
Checked by			
Certified by			
Approved by			

(PSALM Acknowledgment)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Received by			
Reviewed by			

ANNEX A2

Sample Completed Actual Billing Form

IF:

Billing Cycle = Jan. 1 - Jan. 31
Date Prepared = Mar. 15, 2003
Universal Charge Billed:
UC 1 = Php 2,100,00
UC 2 = Php 3,100,000
UC 3 = Php 600,000
UC 4 = Php 350,000
UC 5 = Php 400,000
UC 6 = Php 800,000
DU entitlement from UC for DU's stranded contract costs = Php 3,100,000

THEN:

Universal Charge Billing — UC Form No.

Billing entity	Date prepared: 15-Mar-03
Address	Billing cycle: Jan. 1 - Jan. 31
Total actual energy sales (in KWH)	

Universal charge billed	(in pesos)
UC 1 - Stranded debts & stranded contract costs of NPC	2,100,000
UC 2 - Stranded contract costs of distribution utilities (DUs)	3,100,000
UC 3 - Missionary electrification	600,000
UC 4 - Equalization of taxes & royalties	350,000
UC 5 - Rehabilitation & maintenance of watersheds	400,000
UC 6 - Removal of cross-subsidies	800,000
Total	7,350,000
DU entitlement from UC for DU's stranded contract costs (in pesos)	3,100,000

(Please indicate date signed)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Prepared by			
Checked by			
Certified by			
Approved by			

(PSALM Acknowledgment)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Received by			
Reviewed by			

ANNEX B1

Universal Charge Collection/Remittance — UC Form No.

Collecting entity	Date prepared
Address	Collection Period

Actual collections	(in pesos)
UC 1 - Stranded debts & stranded contract costs of NPC	
UC 2 - Stranded contract costs of distribution utilities (DUs)	
UC 3 - Missionary electrification	
UC 4 - Equalization of taxes & royalties	
UC 5 - Rehabilitation & maintenance of watersheds	
UC 6 - Removal of cross-subsidies	
Total	

Application of collections	UC 1	UC 2	UC 3	UC 4	UC 5	UC 6	Total
Jan Billing Period							
Feb Billing Period							
Mar Billing Period							
Apr Billing Period							
May Billing Period							
Jun Billing Period							
Jul Billing Period							
Aug Billing Period							
Sep Billing Period							
Oct Billing Period							
Nov Billing Period							
Dec Billing Period							
Total							

Less amount withheld for DU's stranded contract costs	
Amount for remittance to PSALM	
Actual amount remitted	
Unremitted collection	
Add 5% penalty	
Amount still due PSALM	

Details of remittance				
Form	☐ Cash	☐ Manager's check	☐ Demand draft	☐ Fund transfer
Amount				

(Please indicate date signed)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Prepared by			
Checked by			
Certified by			
Approved by			

(PSALM Acknowledgment)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Received by			
Validated by			

ANNEX B2

Sample Completed Actual Collection Form

IF:

Collection Period = Feb. 1 - Feb. 28 and Mar. 1 - Mar. 31

Actual Collections (February):
UC 1 = Php 2,000,000
UC 2 = Php 3,000,000
UC 3 = Php 550,000
UC 4 = Php 300,000
UC 5 = Php 350,000
UC 6 = Php 750,000

Actual Collections (March):
UC 1 = Php 2,100,000
UC 2 = Php 3,100,000
UC 3 = Php 600,000
UC 4 = Php 350,000
UC 5 = Php 400,000
UC 6 = Php 800,000

THEN:

Universal Charge Collection/Remittance — UC Form No.

Collecting entity	Date prepared: 15-Apr-03
Address	Collection Period: Mar. 1 - Mar. 31

Actual collections	(in pesos)
UC 1 - Stranded debts & stranded contract costs of NPC	2,100,000
UC 2 - Stranded contract costs of distribution utilities (DUs)	3,100,000
UC 3 - Missionary electrification	600,000
UC 4 - Equalization of taxes & royalties	350,000
UC 5 - Rehabilitation & maintenance of watersheds	400,000
UC 6 - Removal of cross-subsidies	800,000
Total	7,350,000

Application of collec	UC 1	UC 2	UC 3	UC 4	UC 5	UC 6	Total
Jan Billing Period	100,000	100,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	400,000
Feb Billing Period	2,000,000	3,000,000	550,000	300,000	350,000	750,000	6,950,000
Mar Billing Period							
Apr Billing Period							
May Billing Period							
Jun Billing Period							
Jul Billing Period							
Aug Billing Period							
Sep Billing Period							
Oct Billing Period							
Nov Billing Period							
Dec Billing Period							
Total	2,100,000	3,100,000	600,000	350,000	400,000	800,000	7,350,000

Less amount withheld for DU's stranded contract costs	3,100,000
Amount for remittance to PSALM	4,250,000
Actual amount remitted	4,250,000
Unremitted collections	0
Add 5% penalty	0
Amount still due PSALM	0

Details of remittance				
Form	☐ Cash	☐ Manager's check	☐ Demand draft	☐ Fund transfer
Amount				

(Please indicate date signed)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Prepared by			
Checked by			
Certified by			
Approved by			

(PSALM Acknowledgment)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Received by			
Validated by			

ANNEX C

Universal Charge Disbursement — UC Form No.

Requesting entity	Date prepared
Address	
Amount requested (words)	(Figures)
Reason for the availment	

(Please indicate date signed)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Prepared by			
Checked by			
Approved by			

(PSALM Acknowledgment)

	Printed name	Position Title	Signature
Received by			
Reviewed by			
Approved by			

(PDI–April 3 & 4, 2006)

CALL THE INQUIRER CUSTOMER SERVICE HOTLINE
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

The country's most widely read and circulated newspaper in the country is in need of

OPERATIONS MANAGER

to manage a Distributor operation in the area of **Pampanga, Bataan, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija and Zambales.**

QUALIFICATIONS:
- At least 25 years of age;
- College graduates with background in sales and marketing;
- At least 5 years experience in all aspects of business operations;
- Highly motivated; aggressive; hardworking;
- Must possess excellent oral and written communication skills in English, Filipino and local dialects;
- Must be based within the Pampanga area, otherwise must be willing to relocate;
- Preferably male, willing to work in a fast-paced, dynamic and flexible environment.

Send your application letter and comprehensive resumé to:

GQY Distribution Group, Inc.
Penthouse, GRBank Bldg.
Dolores, San Fernando, Pampanga
Or e-mail: gqy_distribution@yahoo.com.ph
Or call: Mr. Jesse Yap at (045) 861-4676

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

The country's most widely read and circulated newspaper in the country is in need of

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUPERVISORS

to work for our provincial distributor partners in the areas of **Pampanga, Bataan, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija and Zambales.**

QUALIFICATIONS:
- College graduates with background in business courses;
- Highly motivated; aggressive; hardworking;
- Must possess excellent oral and written communication skills in English, Filipino and local dialects;
- Must be a resident of any of the above areas.
- Preferably male, willing to work on an early morning shift and in a fast-paced, dynamic and flexible environment.
- Sales-related work experience is an advantage.

Send your application letter and comprehensive resume to:

GQY Distribution Group, Inc.
Penthouse, GRBank Bldg.
Dolores, San Fernando, Pampanga
Or call: Mr. Jesse Yap at (045)861-4676
Or email us at
gqy_distribution@yahoo.com.ph

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

The country's most widely read and circulated newspaper in the country is in need of

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUPERVISORS
(for DAVAO)

to work for our provincial distributor partners

QUALIFICATIONS:
- College graduates with background in business courses;
- Highly motivated; aggressive; hardworking;
- Must possess excellent oral and written communication skills in English, Filipino and local dialects;
- Must be a resident of Davao or nearby provinces
- Preferably male, willing to work on a graveyard shift and in a fast-paced, dynamic and flexible environment.
- Sales-related work experience is an advantage.

Send your application letter and comprehensive resume to:

THE HR MANAGEMENT SERVICES HEAD
Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc.
Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo)
Corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City
Or e-mail: stan@inquirer.com.ph

There's gold in them there hills

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

THAT WAS A FAVORITE EXPRESSION DURING the Alaskan gold rush about 130 years ago. Well there are a lot of minerals in the Philippines, about $1 trillion worth, according to JDV. As soon as the Supreme Court passed a bill allowing foreign investors to own up to 100 percent of their mining projects, I turned my mind to this sector as it was clearly going to be the major driving force for the next few decades. Already, several countries are planning to invest $8.5 billion in the Philippines as soon as suitable mining sites become available and environmental concerns are satisfied.

Looking through the list of possible candidates did not take long. The only company that had been in existence for 50 years and is still making money is PHILEX. I recommended this company twice last year, once at P1.20 and a few months later at P1.40 but this was based purely on the chart. It was not until two months ago that I started looking at the fundamentals.

In the middle of every month, PHILEX posts its copper shipment on the PSE website, which shows the amount of copper, gold and silver exported together with the value of the consignment. A geologist from another mining company gave me an approximate cost of production and to obtain the selling price, I averaged the monthly price of each metal. The results were staggering and I checked and rechecked them unbelievingly because the 1st quarter should exceed the whole of 2005.

With copper selling last year at an estimated average price of $1.50 a pound and gold at $430 an ounce, the company made a net profit of P409 million. I was first drawn to the company's potential when another broker's study was sent to me. Based on a copper price of $2.15, now $2.46, and gold at $555, now $573, they estimated the net profit to be P1.96 billion, almost 5 times the previous year. This study was centered only on the PADCAN mine and did not take into account the company's other mining prospects.

They used a discounted cash flow method and assumed that the life of the PADCAN mine, already in existence for 46 years, would end its life in 2011. On this basis, they came up with a value of P3.76. Recently, chair and CEO Walter Brown has said that at the prevailing level of metal prices, the mine can be extended until 2013, and that would increase the above figure to P5.10.

Credit Lyonnais is the only broker to cover PHILEX at present and they have a price target of P2.70 based on a price/earnings ratio of 8, and a profit of only P787 million. Once they hear the 1st quarter profits at the analyst meeting after Holy Week, they will have to at least double their earnings projection and adjust their price target accordingly. Our Research Department has a price target of P3 based on a net profit of P1 billion and will no doubt be revising it upwards.

All the speculation ceased when 2 weeks ago, the chair gave an interview with the Dow Jones newswire, which is available on the Internet and in another newspaper. He said that the 1st quarter would be very close to the entire earnings of 2005, and for 2006 it would be P1.6 billion or higher, confirming my own calculations. He expected the company to sustain its strong earnings growth momentum, providing the metal prices remain near current levels. By the middle of the year, a new level will be reached containing higher ore grades, and as operational costs remain constant, this will translate into higher pre-tax profits. So, if metal prices remain steady, the 2nd half should be better than the 1st, especially as production for 2006 is slightly higher.

He said that with capital expenditure for PADCAN now declining, it is time for the company to expand its operations. The ongoing exploration in BOYONGAN has so far yielded encouraging results and could result in a high-grade mine with a long life. PHILEX is also looking at its current operations in BAGUIO as well as the possible reopening of the BULAWAN mine. The company is also exploring possible mine sites in ZAMBOANGA as well as in the province of NEGROS. Opportunities overseas are also being studied.

Although PHILEX has an excellent cash flow, which is expected to improve in the coming years, the company is planning to have a right issue later this year so that it will have the necessary resources to finance several projects simultaneously. This will ensure that by the time the PADCAN mines closes, other mines will be in operation, so PHILEX should remain operational for many years to come. The company intends to declare a small cash dividend.

This article was written 2 weeks ago but was deferred because it would have appeared on the same day as the Asian Wall Street Journal. The article did not appear so I waited another week. Unfortunately, during this period, the A and B shares were declassified and the shares surged to P2.70 from P2.18 for the A. The decision to declassify was a good one because it will greatly increase liquidity to foreign investors.

At present, foreigners' hold only 10 percent of the B shares so they tend not to cover the stock because they cannot buy in quantity. Once the shares are merged into one class in June, liquidity will improve greatly and I am certain that all the main foreign investment houses will cover the stock and BUY it. Some of the short-term gain may have been eroded by the delay but the long-term target is still far above the current price and there will also be dividends. I PHILEXCITED about this stock.

Commodity prices are extremely volatile and depend on the global economy. The World Bank has just completed a study, which is reassuring. The United States, the world's largest economy, is expected to continue growing at 3.4 percent, similar to last year. Japan, the second largest economy, has just emerged from more than 12 years of recession and for the first time, the economy shows signs of expanding. The NIKKEI has more than doubled from its low point of 8,000.

China is the driving force with its voracious appetite for metals. Up till now, they have been concentrating on the towns, like Shanghai, but now they are going to concentrate on the numerous outlying villages which have been left behind. This will mean vast amounts of infrastructure, telephone lines and electrification of the villages, all of which will require copper. The new middle class that has come into existence in recent years has started investing in gold.

India has almost the same population as China and is also in the process of upgrading both its towns and villages. These two countries have a combined population of P2.4 billion, 40 percent of the world's population. Indians love gold and always give it as wedding presents. The Arabs and the French have always preferred gold to the dollar. Providing a major oil crisis does not develop, demand should remain at a high level for a foreseeable future.

What is a reasonable price for PHILEX? Price/earnings ratios range from 8 to 16 but the latter is for stable countries, like Australia and Canada. Taking the lowest figure of 8 as Credit Lyonnais and our Research have done, earnings for 2006 are likely to be P1.6 billion to P2 billion, equivalent to 55 centavos to 70 centavos a share. On this basis, a fair valuation is P4.40 to P5.60. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

PeopleSupport reports record profits

By Daxim L. Lucas

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CALL CENTER OPERATIONS in the country yesterday reported a sharp rise in its earnings as both existing and new clients delivered a strong revenue stream last year.

In a briefing yesterday, publicly listed call center operator PeopleSupport said its net income for 2005 rose by 75 percent to $22.8 million from only $8.3 million in the previous year.

In the fourth quarter of 2005 alone, the Los Angeles, California-based company's profit stood at $12.3 million as compared to only $3.3 million in the same period of 2004.

"I am very pleased with PeopleSupport's excellent results for the fourth quarter and full year 2005," said PeopleSupport Philippines president Rainerio Borja. "We surpassed our revenue growth expectations for 2005, and finished the year with solid overall performance."

The company reported gross revenues of $17 million in the fourth quarter of last year—a record—representing a 35-percent increase from the fourth quarter for 2004.

In addition to delivering strong financial results from new and existing clients, the company also achieved several milestones like migrating to its low purpose-built, low-rise building along Ayala Ave. in Makati City. The building is now the company's regional headquarters.

"We are particularly excited about 2006, as PeopleSupport recently added two new growth engines to our service offering," Borja said, explaining that the company expanded its business process outsourcing services in January, followed by the launching of its operations in Costa Rica to tap the Spanish-speaking market.

The company has opened a recruitment center in Davao City to support the company's initiative to tap a southern Philippines-based workforce for its sites in Manila and Cebu.

At the end of 2005, PeopleSupport employed 4,000 in its Manila and Cebu call centers. The company is listed on the Nasdaq exchange in the United States and recently completed its first year as a listed firm, reporting the fastest growth in performance and profitability among its peers.

AIM EXECUTIVE EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING CENTER

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May 15 - 19, 2006

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- Risk Management Process
- Customer Relationship Management Profitability
- Performance Management from HR Perspective

Faculty

Prof. Grace S. Ugut, Ph.D is the Associate Dean of the AIM Executive Education and Lifelong Learning Center and the Program Director of Measuring and Managing Corporate Performance. Her fields of expertise include the following areas in banking and finance: treasury management, risk management, corporate finance, and fixed income securities. She holds a doctorate degree in International Finance from Vienna University in Austria.

- ***Prof. Buenaventura F. Canto***
- ***Prof. Gloria M. de Guzman***
- ***Prof. Antonio Ma. C. Perez***

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Telefax: +632 893 2050 or 892 4011 loc. 228,166,526
Email: excell@aim.edu
Website: www.aim.edu

AIM EQUIS ACCREDITED

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES AND PERIODS OF PROHIBITED ACTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE APRIL 22, 2006 PLEBISCITE TO RATIFY THE CREATION OF BARANGAYS BONGBONGON AND BALOY OUT OF MOTHER BARANGAYS KAUSWAGAN AND TABLON, PURSUANT TO ORDINANCE NOS. 9691-2005 AND 9690-2005, RESPECTIVELY, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, AND THE DIVISION OF BARANGAY POBLACION INTO BARANGAYS POBLACION 1, 2 AND 3, VILLANUEVA, MISAMIS ORIENTAL, PURSUANT TO ORDINANCE NO. 636-2003.
x----------x

ABALOS, Benjamin S. — Chairman
BORRA, Resurreccion Z. — Commissioner
TUASON, Florentino A. Jr. — Commissioner
BRAWNER, Romeo A. — Commissioner

Promulgated: 28 March 2006

RESOLUTION NO. 7641

Pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code, the Local Government Code (Republic Act No. 7160), Republic Act No. 7166, and other election laws, the Commission on Elections RESOLVED to adopt, as it hereby RESOLVES to adopt, the following Calendar of Activities and Periods of Prohibited Acts for the April 22, 2006 plebiscite, to ratify the creation of Barangays Bongbongon and Baloy out of mother Barangays Kauswagan and Tablon, respectively, Cagayan de Oro City, and to ratify the division of Barangay Poblacion into Barangays Poblacion 1, 2 and 3, Villanueva, Misamis Oriental, to wit:

DATE/PERIOD	PLEBISCITE ACTIVITIES	PROHIBITED ACTS COVERED/INVOLVED
April 3, 2006 (MON) to April 24, 2006 (MON)	PLEBISCITE PERIOD	1. Bearing, carrying or transporting firearms or other deadly weapons in public places, including any building, street, park, private vehicle or public conveyance, even if licensed to possess or carry the same, unless authorized in writing by the Commission. (Sec. 261 (p) (q) (s) OEC as amended by Sec. 32 R.A. No. 7166; 2. Suspension of elective local officials. (Sec. 261 (x) OEC); 3. Transfer of officers and employees in the Civil Service. (Sec. 261 (h) OEC); 4. Organization or maintenance of reaction forces, strike forces or other similar forces. (Sec. 261 (u) OEC).
April 3, 2006 (MON) to April 22, 2006 (SAT)		1. Appointment or hiring of new employees. Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 2. Creation or filling up of new positions. (Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 3. Promotions or giving of salary increases, remuneration or privilege. (Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 4. Construction of public works, delivery of materials for public works and issuance of treasury warrants or similar devices for a future undertaking chargeable against public funds. (Sec. 261 (w) OEC); 5. Releases, disbursements or expenditures of public works and social services and development. (Sec. 261 (v) OEC); 6. Appointment or use of special policemen, special/confidential agents or the like. (Sec. 261 (m) OEC); 7. Use of armored land, water or aircraft. (Sec. 261 (r) OEC); 8. Wearing of uniforms and bearing of arms. (Sec. 261 (s) OEC).
April 3, 2006 (MON) to April 20, 2006 (THU) (excluding 12 to 14 April 2006)	CAMPAIGN PERIOD	
April 10, 2006 (FRI)	Submission to Comelec of complete list of all special policemen, special/ confidential agents or persons performing similar functions in the employ of barangay chairman, municipal mayor or any appointing authority. Last day for appointment of members of Plebiscite Committees	
April 17, 2006 (MON) to April 22, 2006 (SAT)	Posting of the Certified List of Voters as of January, 2006.	
April 21, 2006 (FRI)	Inspection of Polling Places	Liquor Ban (starting 12:01 A.M.) – Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving or taking intoxicating liquor, etc. (Sec. 261 (dd), (1), OEC).
April 22, 2006 (SAT)	PLEBISCITE DAY	1. Cockfighting, and other forms of gambling, holding fairs, boxing and/or any other similar sports. (Sec. 261 (dd) OEC)] 2. Giving, accepting free transportation, food, drinks, and things of value (Sec. 89, OEC). 3. Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving, or taking intoxicating liquor, etc. (Sec. 261 (dd), (1), OEC). 4. Opening of booths or stalls for the sale of merchandise, refreshment, etc within 30 meters radius from polling place (Sec. 261 (dd) (2) OEC).
April 24, 2006 (MON)	LAST DAY OF PLEBISCITE PERIOD	

Let this Resolution be published by the Education and Information Department (EID) in a newspaper of general circulation, and in a newspaper with local circulation in Cagayan de Oro City or in the Province of Misamis Oriental. The Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall furnish the Regional Election Director of Region X; the Provincial Election Supervisor of Misamis Oriental, the Election Officers of Cagayan De Oro City and Villanueva, Misamis Oriental; the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government; the Secretary of the Department of Education; the Provincial Governor of Misamis Oriental, the City Mayor, the City Treasurer and the DepEd Superintendent of Cagayan de Oro City; the Municipal Mayor, the Municipal Treasurer and the DepEd District Supervisor of Villanueva, Misamis Oriental, with a copy of this Resolution.

The Election Officers of Cagayan De Oro City and of Villanueva, Misamis Oriental shall give this Resolution the widest publication in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

This Resolution shall take effect upon its promulgation.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

ROMEO A. BRAWNER
Commissioner

(PDI- April 4, 2006)

JESUSA OSORIO TAN YANG

Peacefully joined our Lord
on April 2, 2006 at the age of 87.

She is survived by her

children	*grandchildren*	*great grandchildren*
George & **Kristine**	Kenneth & Cindy Richmond & Carrie Kristopher & Cassie Karen & Garry	Kay, Kevin & Keith Ryan, Mondi, Raine and Yanna
Johnny & **Helena**	Pamela, Jerome & Jonathan	
Irene & **Anthony**	Rheena, Didi & Tara	

Her remains lie at Capilla Dela Virgen De San Antonio, McKinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati City. Interment will be on April 7, Friday, 9:00 A.M. at Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City.

The Yang family requests friends that in lieu of flowers, voluntary donations can be made in memory of Mrs. Jesusa Osorio Tan Yang to the following charities – Augustinian Recollect Sisters, Kalinangan Youth Foundation and McDonald's Charities.

We, the family of the late

MILAGROS SANCHO KANAPI

August 27, 1924 – March 23, 2006

Wish to thank you all who loved her so dearly and, with your prayers and selfless support, came together with us in celebrating her resurrection to her Maker's side.

Girlee & Dick Ng, Chit & Gerry Cabrejas, Nini & Bing Capati, Pichina & Domingo Ngo, Tess & Pepot Kanapi, Cindee & Bobby Kanapi, Mila & Dennis O'Connor, Bopeep & Mario Kanapi, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"For time will never dim the love we share."
You Promised Me, I Promised You
Corazon Hinlo Vivo, October 24, 1992

In Loving Memory

On the Tenth Death Anniversary of

Hon. Martiniano P. Vivo

Philippine Legion of Honor Awardee
Former Commissioner of Immigration
Founding & Senior Partner, Tañada, Vivo & Tan Law Offices
Member, Order of the Knights of Rizal
Member, Upsilon Sigma Phi
Member, College Editors' Guild

For his memory, Holy Masses will be offered today, Tuesday, April 4, 2006 at the following Churches:

St. Raphael Archangel Parish, Calaca, Batangas	5:30 AM
Sacred Heart Parish, Kamuning, Quezon City	7:00 AM
Divine Word Mission Seminary, 101 E. Rodriguez, Q.C.	7:00 AM
Immaculate Conception Cathedral Parish, 39 Lantana, Q.C.	7:00 AM
Cathedral Shrine of the Good Shepherd, Fairview Park, Q.C.	6:00 AM
St. Peter's Parish, Commonwealth Ave., Q.C.	7:00 AM

His loving wife **Corazon**; daughter **Ining** and husband **Chito Guevara**; grandchildren **Martin, Bernard, Christine** and **Angeline**; great granddaughter **Angel**; and relatives request the pious readers, especially those whose lives he had touched, to pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace in our Lord's loving embrace.

Mercedes P. Fuentes

of San Francisco C.A. USA

passed away peacefully on March 29, 2006

Her parents **Hermogenes** and **Virginia Fuentes**, sister and their spouse **Margaret** and **Vince**, **Mildred** and **Patrick**, **May** and **Angelo**, nephews and nieces **Alex**, **Patricia**, **Cesco**, **Mik-mik** and **Misha** and other relatives request the readers to pray for the eternal soul.

Interment will be on April 4, 2006 in San Francisco, C.A. Masses and Spiritual prayers will be appreciated.

FR. MICHAEL F. ROONEY, S.J.

was called home to the Lord on Monday, 3 April 2006.

Wake: University Church of Christ the King, Ateneo de Naga University, Naga City
Mass will be celebrated every evening at 8:00 p.m.

Funeral: at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, 9 April in the University Church of Christ the King, Ateneo de Naga University

Interment: Jesuit cemetery behind the University Church, immediately after the Funeral Liturgy.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF HIS SOUL.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
— 2 Corinthians 5:8

Message of Thanks

His loving wife, **Cesaria (Charing) Soriano Macatangay**, his children and their spouses **Evelyn** and **Joey Wambangco, Wilma, Evangeline & Dondie Dy, Precioso** and **Ruby Roxas, Edgardo & Detty Dimacuha, Limneo† & Rory Gutierrez, Sammy & Clarissa Castillo, Marvin, Marlon**, his grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives & friends of the late

JOSE "PEPING" C. MACATANGAY

of Batangas City

who joined his Creator on March 28, 2006

wish to convey their heartfelt gratitude to all those who paid their last respects, offered Masses and prayers, sent flowers, message of sympathy and Novena Masses, sent food and drinks during the wake and who in various ways gave comfort to the family.

A Prayer gathering will be offered on the 9th day of Daddy Peping's demise, on April 05, 2006, Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. at the HOTEL PONTEFINO, Gulod Labac, Batangas City.

LUCIA SILVERIO-SOLIDUM

Died in the Grace of our Lord on March 30, 2006 at the age of 69.

Her husband **Leon**, son **Ronald**, stepmother, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, grandchildren and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be held at Manila South Cemetery after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at Saint Anthony Church, Singalong, Manila, on April 5, 2006.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...

INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
1. Copy of Death Certificate
2. Any identification document (I.D.)

WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS and bank-to-bank payments

NATIONAL CLASSIFIEDS

More Classified Ads on pages A7, A22, B2, B4, B5, B7 & B10.

Online broker to hold initial public offering in June

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ONLINE BROKER CITISECONline.com is braving the stock market in June this year to raise P165 million from a proposed initial public offering, according to the Philippine Stock Exchange and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Citiseconline, the first purely online equities trader to list on the bourse, is seeking regulatory approval to offer 110 million shares at P1 to P1.50 apiece.

Should it push through with its IPO, Citiseconline should qualify under the PSE's small and medium enterprises board.

Citiseconline plans to use the proceeds from the planned IPO to expand its client base and fund investments in technology.

Citiseconline has tapped SB Capital as its underwriter.

The company was incorporated in 1999 and began commercial operations in 2001.

The company earlier said it wanted to tap Filipino investors overseas through its online trading and information services.

Over the years, Citiseconline has developed financial services to empower the retail investor.

These include access to real-time quotes, research services and reports, as well as expert-broker support.

It also allows real-time execution of trades, which is the best practice in the local online trading industry.

For a minimum investable fund of P25,000, investors can trade online through Citiseconline's website.

MARA PAWNSHOP I, II, III, IV and Comembo Br. of Makati City. Auction Sale on Apr. 12, 2006, Wed. at 10:30, 11:00, 12:30, 1:30 and 8:30 in the morning and on the afternoon respectively, Nov. 12-Dec. 12, 2005. Sons of J. Lanuza, Auctioneer. (PDI-April 4, 2006)

MARA PAWNSHOP BR. of 2230 M. Roxas St., Sta. Ana, Menila. Auction Sale on Apr. 11, 2006, Wed. at 2:30 pm respectively, Nov. 12-Dec. 12, 2005. Sons of J. Lanuza, Auctioneer (PDI-April 4, 2006)

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PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION
PNOC The Energy Company
Building 1, Energy Center, Memit Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Nos. 893-6001 to 47 local 2104
Direct Line: 840-1619/Fax No.: (632) 840-1614

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC), through its 2006 Corporate Budget, intends to apply the sum of Four Million Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php4,500,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract, (ABC) to payments under the contract for the ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY FOR PNOC EC'S APPLICATION OF PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE FOR THE COAL OPERATING CONTRACT NO. 41 AREA (the "Project"). Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the bid opening.

PNOC EC now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential bidders to apply for eligibility and short listing for the ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY FOR PNOC EC'S APPLICATION OF PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE FOR THE COAL OPERATING CONTRACT NO. 41 AREA in Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay.

Interested consultants must submit their LOIs on or before April 12, 2006 at the PNOC EC's Procurement Section (c/o Ms. J. C. Fabian), Building 1, Energy Center, Memit Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City and secure the eligibility documents therefrom upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php2,000.00. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of accomplished eligibility documents shall be on the date of the opening of eligibility documents on April 20, 2006 not later than 3:00 P.M. at the PNOC EC Head Office. Only those that are short listed will be entitled to submit bids.

PNOC EC's Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) shall draw up the short list of consultants from those who have submitted LOIs and have been determined as eligible both in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184). The short list of prospective bidders shall consist of 3 to 7 consultants. The criteria and rating system for short listing are:

- Experience of consulting firm in conducting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – 20%
- Capability of consulting firm to execute the Project – 20%
- Experience of personnel to be assigned to the PRoject in conducting EIA – 30%
- Qualifications of personnel to be assigned to the Project – 30%

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to Filipino citizens or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only bids from short listed consultants will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 the contract will only be awarded to the Highest Rated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

PNOC EC reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

This publication is also posted in our website at www.pnoc-ec.com.ph and in the DBM website at www.procurementservice.net.

JCF
(PDI-March 28 & April 4, 2006)

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

MWCI sets aside ₱4.6B for upgrade, acquisitions

Ayala-led firm to pursue projects outside its area

By Christine A. Gaylican

AYALA-LED MANILA WATER COMPANY INC. (MWCI) yesterday said that the company would be embarking on a P4.6-billion capital expenditure program this year to expand its current service area and bid for new water investments.

During the water firm's annual stockholders meeting in Makati yesterday, MWCI officers led by company chairman Fernando Zobel de Ayala said that they would want to sustain the company's growth momentum in 2006 and beyond.

With the P4.6-billion capital investment program, they hope to reach customers in high-level areas of Taguig, Antipolo, Taytay, Cainta, San Mateo, Montalban, Angono, Binangonan, Baras and Jala-jala.

This would be the company's highest level of investment since it took over the west concession eight years ago, according to MWCI president Antonino T. Aquino.

"With the extension of the company's income tax holiday granted by the Board of Investments last December, East Zone customers can expect more water service improvements as an additional P500 million in tax savings had been earmarked for expanding the service to these areas," Aquino said.

Part of the capital will be used to finance MWCI's bid for the water service projects in Bulacan and Nueva Ecija.

"At this point we our actively pursuing projects outside our concession area," said MWCI chief financial officer Sherisa P. Nuesa.

MWCI reported a 51-percent increase in its net income last year to P2.01 billion, company officials said.

Also, company revenues grew by 35 percent to P5.68 billion. Resultant earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (Ebitda) went up by 46 percent to P2.96 billion, reflecting strong operating cash flows, Nuesa said.

In 2005, Manila Water secured a $64-million loan from the World Bank, channeled through the Land Bank of the Philippines, to fund the Manila Third Sewerage Project.

The MTSP is an $85-million project, which includes the construction of treatment plants and installation of sewer systems. It is expected to triple the wastewater service coverage within the East Zone over the next five years.

LRWC increases stake in internet gaming operator

BINGO GAMES OPERATOR LEISURE AND Resorts World Corp. (LRWC) is hiking its interest in First Cagayan Leisure & Resort Corp. to 69.7 percent.

First Cagayan is the master licensor for Internet gaming operations within the Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Free Port.

In its disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, LRWC said that its board had approved the acquisition of 31,250 shares, or 25 percent, of First Cagayan shareholder Joanna Heights Inc.

The transaction is valued at P800 a share or a total of P25 million.

The shares were valued based on a recent deal between LRWC and First Cagayan.

Once it completes the additional subscription, LRWC will hold 115,000 shares in First Cagayan, or close to 70 percent from 50.75 percent currently.

The completion of the acquisition is subject to the execution of definitive purchase agreements between LRWC and Joanna Heights.

In March, LRWC gained majority control of First Cagayan when it acquired an additional 15.75 percent of the Internet gaming operator for P32 million.

During a recent investors' briefing, First Cagayan announced that it has already licensed 16 I-gaming firms, of which 10 are now operating.

Aside from First Cagayan, LRWC also controls AB Leisure Exponent Inc., operator of Bingo Bonanza. *Elizabeth Sanchez*

Bonds buyback to boost GIR

Brady bonds more expensive now than newer global issues

By Doris C. Dumlao

NATIONAL TREASURER OMAR CRUZ YESterday said the planned retirement of $774 million in outstanding Brady bonds would further beef up the country's foreign exchange reserves as this would free up underlying collateral.

In a press briefing after the treasury bills auction yesterday, Cruz told reporters the buyback of these bonds would free up zero- coupon US treasuries currently held by the US Federal Reserves and these securities will form part of the country's gross international reserves (GIR).

The country's GIR level has, for the first time in history, exceeded $20 billion this year.

Cruz said the shift from foreign borrowings to more domestic borrowings was part of the government's domestic liabilities management efforts.

The Brady bonds have call options at different dates and the call exercise would depend on several factors, including the value of foreign debts outstanding, net present value of savings from debt servicing and the possibility of refinancing.

The call option gives the government the right (not an obligation) to buy back the bonds within a specific time period. It profits on a call when the price of the asset involved increases.

He said the Philippines had the option to retire the bonds and refinance them with new offshore or domestic bonds, or pay them using the government's available foreign exchange.

The Philippines issued $4.248 billion worth of Brady bonds between 1990 and 1992 under a debt restructuring program. Some of which had been retired through various bond exchange programs. Most of country's remaining Brady bonds will mature in 2017 and 2018. Some of those with shorter tenors are falling due in the next three years.

The Brady bonds, named after former US Treasury chief Nicholas Brady, were aimed at helping heavily indebted countries, like the Philippines, in restructuring their commercial obligations.

Cruz said the Brady bonds had become more expensive compared with newer global bond issues because bond spreads have been tightening in the past several years. He said several Latin American countries had resorted to the same tack.

Limiting GSIS, SSS investment options proposed

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A CONGRESSMAN IS PROPOSING MEASURES prohibiting state pension funds Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System from investing in stocks, foreign currency or multilateral and corporate bonds that involve "speculative and unpredictable" returns.

Under House Bills 4237 and 5215 proposed by Iloilo representative Arthur D. Defensor, investment activities of the GSIS and the SSS will be limited to "areas which assure predictability in order to protect mass of members from the vagaries of trade and commerce and from enterprises with false pretensions of track record of profitability."

The two bills—which are seeking amendments to the respective charters of the two pension funds—were filed last Feb. 4.

The proposal was strongly opposed by the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE).

The exchange will protest the bill when hearings start at the Lower House, PSE president Francis Lim told reporters at the sidelines of a welcome ceremony for members of the Asian Securities Analysts Federation (Asaf) yesterday. However, hearings on the proposal have yet to be scheduled.

HB No. 4237 seeks to amend Section 36 of the GSIS' charter, which allows the pension fund to invest in debt instruments, loans, bonds or promissory notes of any solvent corporation, common and preferred stocks, interest bearing deposits or securities in any domestic bank and foreign currency deposits. The proposed bill seeks to bar the GSIS from investing in these instruments.

Defensor said huge reserve funds were siphoned off monthly from members.

"It is necessary for the GSIS to invest these funds but only in ventures where profits are definite and the risks involved are minimal. There are however instances where the returns are too speculative and the risks quite high, including stocks, real estate and banking ventures," he said.

House Bill 5215 seeks to limit investment options of the SSS by amending a portion of its charter.

Defensor said fluctuations in market prices and in foreign exchange rates had unpredictable effects on the funds of the SSS.

US assistance to RP increased

PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED States Albert del Rosario yesterday said the US government had approved a higher level of assistance for the country for fiscal year 2006 of $131.2 million, up 42 percent or by $38.5 million from the $92.7 million original US budgetary allocation for the Philippines.

Del Rosario, in a statement, said this was achieved by the Philippine mission despite competing demands for the US budget—soaring US budget deficit, costs of the Iraq and the Afghanistan operations and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas affected by hurricane Katrina.

"Notwithstanding the prevailing intense efforts of the US government to rein in the budget, there remains a considerable level of goodwill for the Philippines as manifested in the increased levels of assistance," Del Rosario said. He added that the effort to maintain US assistance levels would be carried on for the fiscal year 2007 budget.

The FY 2006 increase covers the programs supported by Foreign Military Financing (FMF), Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Excess Defense Articles (EDA), Economic Support Funds (ESF) and law enforcement and counterterrorism.

The increased US assistance for defense programs is intended to support the Philippine Defense Reform (PDR) initiative and to enhance the sustainability of the military's operational and logistics functions. Of the amount, $33 million was earmarked for FMF/FMS and $17.5 million for EDA.

On law enforcement, the US has increased assistance to $5 million to support the transformation program for the Philippine National Police (PNP) to improve its counterterrorism capacities.

On ESF, the United States has provided an increased outlay totaling $25 million to support the Mindanao peace process. Del Rosario said the US Congress gave its assurance that more assistance would be forthcoming once a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was reached.

Telecom industry regulator plans to jack up penalties

By Daxim L. Lucas

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY REGulators plan to increase the monetary penalties charged on erring companies under their ambit to raise compliance with the industry's various laws and guidelines.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, National Telecommunications Commission chief Ronald O. Solis said he preferred to raise the penalty scheme by amending existing guidelines instead of going straight to Congress for new legislation.

"We are looking at legal support to increase our penalties," he said.

At present, the penalty is pegged at only P200 per offense per day. This was based on the guidelines issued soon after the agency was formed in the late 1970s.

"That amount is a pittance," he said.

The NTC regulates the operations of players in the highly lucrative telecommunications sector, including some of the country's largest firms like the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) and Globe Telecom Inc.

The NTC chief did not specify which violations he wanted to address with the tougher penalty scheme although he hinted that some companies had been habitually remiss in their duties in filing ministerial reports and paying regulatory fees.

"For the late payment of fees, the penalty is immediately 50 percent [of the initial amount]," he said.

Solis said his office would review the penalty structure before coming up with the proposed increases.

Once this is determined, he said the NTC would amend the implementing rules and regulations of the law that created it. Should the existing law prove inadequate, however, he said the NTC would raise the issue with the legislators.

"We will have to recommend this to lawmakers if we don't have to power to impose large sums of fees and penalties," he said.

Solis pointed out that the law governing the NTC's regulatory activities was enacted in 1979 when the landscape of the telecommunications industry was very different from what it is today.

He said the NTC had been operating under this charter for 27 years now.

Mitsubishi, Tanduay OK ecology project

TANDUAY DISTILLERS INC. AND JAPAN'S Mitsubishi Corp. signed a memorandum of understanding for a greenhouse gas reducing project for Tanduay subsidiary Absolut Chemicals Inc.

The project involves the planning, development and possible construction of a wastewater treatment digestor and methane collector.

Expected to commence operations in 2007, the project, which is currently under the feasibility study stage, will augment the wastewater facilities of Absolut Chemicals and reduce further its greenhouse gas emissions. Absolut produces alcohol for Tanduay.

The project is being implemented under the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol—a global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to address global warming. The agreement highlights the joint commitment of the Lucio Tan Group and Mitsubishi to protect the environment.

The memorandum of understanding was signed by Masataka Shimazu, manager of Mitsubishi Corp.'s Carbon Credit Based Project, and Lucio Tan Jr. and Wilson Young, Tanduay director and president, respectively.

Breaktime . . .

From page B4

because that is the so-called "justice system."

***

ON Ash Wednesday last year, an executive of a software company brought his BMW car in a prestigious dealer for service.

He then left for abroad, confident that his car would be ready by the time he arrived three weeks later. No, it was not the case.

The prestigious BMW dealer gave him a song and dance number about why, after three weeks, he could not yet get the car.

Finally, the prestigious dealer confessed that a service advisor had to use the car to go to Pangasinan. Unfortunately the car figured in an accident. It was a total wreck.

See, that's the kind of service you can get even from a prestigious dealer of a prestigious car company like BMW.

Still, the prestigious dealer promised to replace the car. Indeed, a car was delivered to the poor executive after a couple of months.

Guess what—up to now, more than a year since, the poor guy still cannot use the car. It is not registered, for one, and so it does not have license plates. Why? Well, the prestigious dealer would not give the plates to the poor executive. Why? He refused to sign an insurance claim that did not tell the real story. In short, he did not want any part in a fraud.

To date, the poor guy continues to pay the amortization for the original ("totaled") car he bought from the prestigious dealer. You know what—he takes public transport!

Interest in Transco ...

From page B4

proval of Transco's regulatory asset base, which would allow prospective investors to calculate the firm's maximum allowable revenue.

This, she explained, would give potential investors a clearer picture of their expected revenue stream, thus giving them a better idea of how they should structure their bids.

"We're clarifying all issues, and we're going to touch base with all stakeholders as it is going to be difficult if we proceed without doing this. We don't want to be stopped along the way," she said.

"Once we get some consensus and some comfort that we will not be legally stopped, then we will make an announcement (of the bidding)," she added.

Longer term T-bill rates continue to slide

From page B1

Cruz said.

He said expectations of a slowdown in inflation and accumulated liquidity overhang likewise lured more banks to the T-bills auction.

"There's P6.5 billion in fresh money chasing the auction," he said, noting the net liquidity freed up by maturing securities this year less the award at yesterday's auction.

Out of the P9.5 billion worth of securities maturing this week, P7 billion consisted of treasury bonds and P2.5 billion were treasury bills.

Cruz said it was hard to say whether the 91-day rate had bottomed out, but said there was room for the longer tenors to further soften for the rest of the year.

The 364-day paper lured P7.63 billion worth of bids and the 182-day, P4.37 billion.

"The slight rejection on the three-month (bills) shows that government has an improved cash position," said Banco de Oro Universal Bank chief strategist Jonathan Ravelas.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 3, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	6,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	35	35	34.5	35	401,100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	62.5	62.5	62	62	3,824,000
China Banking Corp.	685	710	685	710	2,810
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	600
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.47	0.5	0.47	0.49	17,260,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	74	74	72	73	307,600
International Exch. Bank	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	2,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	39	39	38.5	39	535,300
Philippine National Bank	34	34	34	34	53,000
Phil. Savings Bank	40	40	40	40	5,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.5	13.5	13.25	13.25	31,700
Security Bank Corp.	43	43	43	43	62,800
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	28	28	28	28	12,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3200	3200	3200	3200	180
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	170	175	170	175	43,690
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2160	2160	2150	2150	400
Ivantage Corp.	0.95	0.95	0.93	0.93	430,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	44	45	44	44	49,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	46	47	45.5	47	1,206,300
Manila Electric Co. A	13.25	13.75	13.25	13.5	95,600
Manila Electric Co. B	20	21.5	20	21	1,368,400
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	2,354,000
Petron Corp.	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.3	3,814,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	130,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.6	3.65	3.6	3.6	63,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.5	94,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35	35.5	35	35	297,600
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.55	2.55	2.55	2.55	264,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	260,000
San Miguel Corp. A	60	60.5	60	60.5	114,800
San Miguel Corp. B	81	81	80.5	81	48,600
Universal Robina Corp.	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75	367,300
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	1,460,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.3	7,830,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.46	1.48	1.46	1.46	1,355,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4	4	4	4	592,000
CHEMICALS					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	20,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	1,000,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.41	540,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0065	0.007	0.0065	0.007	51,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	5,000,000
Ayala Corp.	355	357.5	352.5	355	132,330
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	230,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.1	5.1	5	5.1	347,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.55	174,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.89	170,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.2	9.2	9	9	9,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1	1.04	0.98	1.02	19,200,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.45	3,292,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	10,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	2.9	2.9	2.85	2.85	399,000
F&J Princ.E Holdings Corp.	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.89	30,000
F&J Princ.E Hldgs. B	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	20,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	80,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	5.9	6	5.8	5.9	802,000
Medco Holdings	0.24	0.245	0.225	0.225	1,050,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	70,000
Pacifica	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	2,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.24	0.24	1,600,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.51	0.53	0.51	0.53	420,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.135	0.135	7,200,000
SM Investments Corp.	228	228	226	228	75,200
South China Resources Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	200,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.41	230,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	900,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	1,140,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	11	11.75	11	11.5	9,479,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.36	200,000
Belle Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	4,701,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	4,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	50,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.92	1.92	1.9	1.9	643,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	50,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	2,120,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.245	0.26	0.245	0.245	450,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.65	0.66	0.64	0.64	7,020,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	270,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.3	1.32	1.3	1.3	7,039,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.225	120,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	1,300,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	6,500,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.5	1.5	4,405,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	36,740,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	540,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	8	8	8	8	1,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	2,100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.54	1.56	1.54	1.56	591,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.6	7.6	2,325,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	6,310,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	1,200
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	28,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.96	0.98	1,880,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	875	875	870	875	27,230
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.85	2.95	2.8	2.9	3,654,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1925	1930	1920	1925	34,780
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	900,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	500,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	20,000
Philweb Corp.	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.025	22,900,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2.5	2.55	2.5	2.55	431,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	250,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	11.5	11.5	11.25	11.25	176,400
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.78	1.78	1.76	1.76	242,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.44	1,000,000
EDUCATION					
Far Eastern University	645	645	645	645	1,200
iPeople Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	15,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.94	1.94	1.88	1.88	182,000
Paxys Inc.	9	9	9	9	342,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	1,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.26	1.26	1.2	1.22	419,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.4	1.4	1.34	1.34	100,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	62,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.7	558,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.22	14,240,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	2,530,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.02	0.019	0.019	78,100,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	75,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	170,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	2.7	2.7	2.55	2.6	4,134,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2.7	2.7	2.55	2.65	5,853,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	336,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.3	170,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	80,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	3,600,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	435,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	11,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	20,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	8,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref.) SerieS U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	4,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	1,500
PLDT 10% Pref Series AA	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	498,700

DISCLOSURES

EQUITABLE PCI Bank Inc. has elected lawyer Edmundo L. Tan as director to replace Vicente L. Panlilio, who resigned on Feb. 21.

***

LAWYER Michael C. Chavez has been appointed acting corporate secretary of **AsiaTrust Development Bank Inc.** Larry T. San Jose was named vice president and area service manager. ***Compiled by Kate Pedroso, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

April 3, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.825287	1.000000	51.1580
Japan	Yen	0.007013	0.008498	0.4347
United Kingdom	Pound	1.434431	1.738100	88.9177
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.106361	0.128878	6.5931
Switzerland	Franc	0.632792	0.766754	39.2256
Canada	Dollar	0.705977	0.855432	43.7622
Singapore	Dollar	0.510824	0.618965	31.6650
Australia	Dollar	0.589659	0.714490	36.5519
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.189206	2.652661	135.7048
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.220041	0.266624	13.6400
Brunei	Dollar	0.509247	0.617055	31.5673
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000110	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.021245	0.025743	1.3170
UAE	Dirham	0.224721	0.272294	13.9300
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.211700	61.9881
Argentina	Peso	0.268168	0.324939	16.6232
India	Rupee	0.018554	0.022482	1.1501
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.224135	0.271584	13.8937
Mexico	New Peso	0.075895	0.091962	4.7046
New Zealand	Dollar	0.506218	0.613384	31.3795
South Africa	Rand	0.134719	0.163239	8.3510
Korea	Won	0.000849	0.001029	0.0526
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025359	0.030728	1.5720

A CALL FOR HER RETENTION IN OFFICE AS DISTRICT COLLECTOR FOR THE PORT OF CEBU

ATTY. LOURDES V. MANGAOANG

- *exemplary proactive and dynamic leadership by streamlining Customs procedure, consequently reducing bureaucratic red tape*
- *all-time high revenue collection*
- *curbed smuggling and other illegal practices*
- *a partner in achieving economic prosperity through exports*

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

Her Excellency
GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President
Republic of the Philippines
Malacañang, Manila

Dear Madame President

Warm greetings from Cebu business!

Cebu business is happy to inform you of the excellent performances of Collector Lourdes V. Mangaoang, especially on her quick action on the various pressing concerns of Cebu's export sector which needed much support.

Atty. Mangaoang is perfect for Cebu. We have observed her as a no nonsense collector who can institute the needed reforms in Cebu especially in curbing smuggling in the region. With her true commitment as a leader not withstanding the outstanding collection effort in these times of rising cost and declining economic indicators, the business community would like to give our full support to **Atty. Lourdes V. Mangaoaong.** Her retention in Cebu Port to ensure the further development of Cebu's economy is most vital.

In behalf of Cebu business, we express our sincerest gratitude to your office for this development.

Yours truly,

MR. ROBERT L. GO
President, CCCI

CARLOS G. CO
VP for Visayas, PCCI

MEPZCEM

March 9, 2006

Mr. Margarito Teves
Secretary
Department of Finance
DOF Building, BSP Complex
Roxas Blvd., Manila

Thru: Commissioner Napoleon Morales
Bureau of Customs, Port Area, Manila

Dear Secretary Teves:

Our organization, the Mactan Export Processing Zone Chamber of Exporter and Manfuacturers of **MEPZCEM** would like to express once again our full support for the leadership of Atty. Lourdes Mangaoang as District Collector for the Port of Cebu. We find her proactive, no nonsense, and service-oriented management style most suitable for the locators inside the economic zones. We have taken notice of her many efforts to dismantle the barriers and bureaucracies that has burdened us for so long. Among the district collectors we have encountered, she is still by far, the most dynamic and transparent. These are the leadership qualities we need from the government officials supporting the export industry.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,,

ROBERT OLIVER
President, MEPZCEM
President and CEO, Timex Philippines

Chamber of Customs Brokers, Inc. Cebu Chapter (CCBI-Cebu) and
Professional Customs Brokers Association of the Phils.

March 3, 2006

Hon. MARGARITO TEVES
Secretary, Department of Finance
Finance Center Building
Arroceros Street, Metro Manila

Hon. NAPOLEON L. MORALES
Commissioner, Bureau of Customs
Port Area, Manila

Sirs:

We are officers of the Chamber of Customs Brokers, Inc.; (CCBI) Cebu Chapter, conjoined with the officers of the Professional Customs Brokers Association of the Philippines, (PCBAPI) Visayas-Mindanao, writing to you with all humility and candidness to ventilate our collective sentiments.

We are so disturbed with the information reaching us from reliable sources that your leadership has resolved to relieve our District Collector, Atty. Lourdes V. Mangaoang, and be replaced by an MICP Deputy Collector.

We appeal for, and beg you to reconsider your decision from the very standpoints of our "hands-on" experience and observations as principal partners of the Bureau in its assigned goals.

Atty. Lourdes V. Mangaoang possessed all the qualities of a firm, yet passioned management and leadership skills, depth legal prowess, and clear policy directions. She has consistently demonstrated desirable office decorum which are fair and square, sterling personal traits, and institutes discipline among customs servants which not only earned our highest esteem and admiration; but that which likewise command our great respect!

From the lessons of history of our practice as licensed and professional customs brokers spanning in decades, Atty. **LOURDES V. MANGAOANG** stands prominent as the "**first-ever**" District Collector of Customs of Cebu who keeps open her office for consultation and dialogues, thereby effectively bringing tariff and customs administration nearest to the governed.

Notwithstanding herculian odds, Atty. Mangaoang consistently attains, even fairly surpassed revenue collection targets.

By contrast, the MICP Deputy Collector-aspirant is reputedly authoritarian, despotic, and had unceremoniously linked to strings of cases invoking of an extremely low moral suasion, and one who perenially clings into the weights thrown by an influential sibling.

Hence, we most respectfully request for the RETENTION of Atty. Lourdes V. Mangaoang at the Port of Cebu

Very truly yours,

ALFREDO G. LANTICSE
President, CCBI-Cebu

DEO R. ALBERCA
Vice Pres., Prof'l Dev't.
CCBI-Cebu

BENSING R. RAGUINDIN
President, PCBAPI-Vismin

Philippine Exporters Confederation (PHILEXPORT)
PHILEXPORT

The Confederation of Philippine Exporters Foundation (Cebu), Inc. (popularly known as **PHILEXPORT CEBU**) the umbrella organization of the different industry sectors of the province of Cebu, strongly declares its full support for the plans and programs laid out by Cebu BOC District Collector, **ATTY. MA. LOURDES V. MANGAOANG**.

PHILEXPORT CEBU fully supports District Collector Mangaoang's policy of transparency, efficiency and client-friendly approach in the operations of the Bureau of Customs under her watch.

Additionally, **PHILEXPORT CEBU** believes that the new thrust of DC Mangaoang will make the Bureau of Customs more responsive to the needs of exporters and importers alike. There have been big improvements in the Bureau's operations since she took over the District's management.

The exporters have found a partner in its shared goal of achieving economic prosperity through exports and in jointly combating corruption and eliminating bureaucracy. We look forward to a smooth and long-lasting cooperation with the Bureau under her administration.

APOLINAR G. SUAREZ, JR.
President-Philexport Cebu
Cebu City, March 3, 2005

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

March 8, 2006

Her Excellency
PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
Republic of the Philippines
Malacañan Palace, Manila

Dear **Madam President:**

Warm greetings!
We wish to express our appreciation for designating ***ATTY. LOURDES V. MANGAOANG*** as District Collector of Customs of the Port of Cebu. Since she assumed office, collections in the Port of Cebu have greatly increased. In fact, in her first month, the Port of Cebu exceeded its monthly target by ninety (90) percent.

Atty. Mangaoang has demonstrated exemplary leadership by streamlining Customs procedures in Cebu which had significantly reduced red tape. She is an epitome of trade facilitation.

Under her watch, smuggling of motor vehicles and other articles has greatly decreased. She has supported local businessmen, exporters, and Mactan Export Processing Zone Investors, and has made the Bureau of Customs a partner in the economic development of the region.

We support and commend Mangaoang. We therefore request her retention as District collector of the Port of Cebu.

ANTONIO CUENCO
Representative
South District, Cebu City

NERISSA SOON-RUIZ
Representative
6th District, Cebu

RAUL DEL MAR
Representative
North District, Cebu City

EDUARDO GULLAS
Representative
1st District, Cebu

HERMINIO TEVES
Representative
1st District, Bohol

ORLANDO FUA, JR.
Representative
Lone District, Siquijor

LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES
THE WILL TO SERVE

March 13, 2006

HER EXCELLENCY GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President of the Philippines
Malacañan Palace
Manila

Dear Madam President,

I am writing in behalf of the 47 Municipal Mayor of the Province of Cebu to express our support for the retention of ATTY. LOURDES V. MANGAOANG as District Collector of Customs, Port of Cebu, Bureau of Customs.

The Bureau of Customs plays an important role in sustaining the vibrant economy of Cebu. This would be enhanced if the head of the Office, earns the respect of the business and political community. Atty. Mangaoang has shown exemplary capacity not only in leading an organization that needs constant reminder of efficiency and honesty, but also in dealing with all the other sectors operating in the Port of Cebu, and of course Cebu's business community.

Accounts have it that Atty. Mangaoang had initiated reforms in the Bureau and appears successful, and for this, we therefore endorsed that Collector Mangaoang be retained to complete such reforms and allow the Bureau to achieve its targets both organizational and revenue targets.

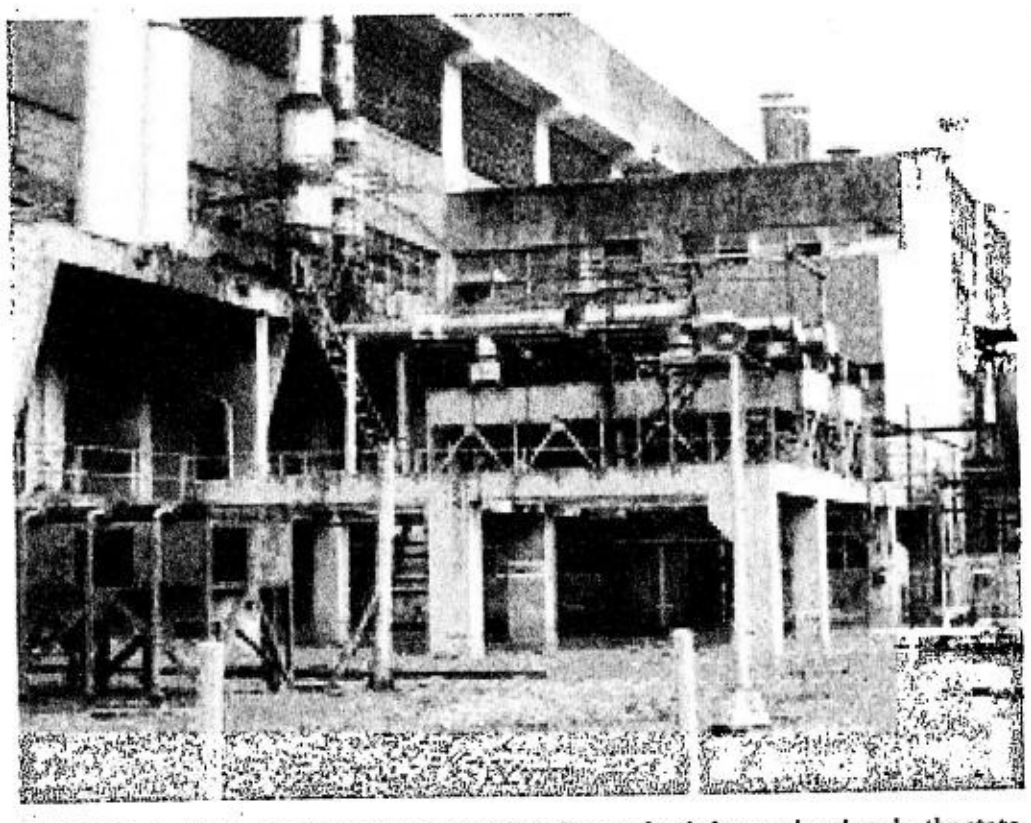
Rest assure of our continued support. Thank you very much.

Truly yours,

RONALD ALLAN G. SESANTE
Mayor- Dalaguete, Cebu and
President, League of Municipalities of the Phil. Cebu Chapter

BUSINESS

Napocor back in the black after 10 years



A POWER plant belonging to Napocor. After bleeding profusely for nearly a decade, the state firm is able to post a positive net income for the first time.

PSALM cites improved fuel mix, better fuel prices, hike in rates

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER INCURRING LOSSES FOR NEARLY 10 years, the state-run National Power Corp. has returned to profitability, posting an unaudited net income of P16 million in 2005.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) president Nieves Osorio said Napocor's improved financial position could be attributed to its improved fuel mix, better fuel prices, and the increase in rates, which the Energy Regulatory Commission approved in April last year.

"I'm still trying to have the numbers reviewed," Osorio told reporters. "They're almost break even in terms of net operating income, but they're positive in terms of net income."

Napocor senior finance department manager Lorna Dy had earlier said that one of the biggest factors contributing to the state firm's recovery—up from P29.9 billion in losses in 2004—was actually the strengthening of the peso against the greenback.

The Napocor finance department's projections were based on a foreign exchange rate of P56 to a dollar, Dy said.

According to projections the Napocor finance department made in the middle of 2005, a turnaround for the first time since 1998 could be attributed to the reduction in the state firm's interest expenses to P22.64 billion in 2005 from P30.25 billion in 2004.

The reduction in interest charges stems from the government's absorption of P200 billion of Napocor's debts two years ago.

The state firm was also able to bring down operational expenses in 2005 through the economic dispatch of its power plants and an improved generation mix.

Napocor president Cyril del Callar had earlier said that the state firm was able to cut fuel costs by more than P1 billion to only P11.8 billion last year due to the reduction of its use of oil-fired power plants.

He said Napocor used only 709 million liters of fuel oil in 2005, bringing fuel costs for about 1 million liters of fuel oil down to P11.8 billion from P13 billion in 2004

Instead of oil, Del Callar said Napocor opted to dispatch plants using indigenous fuel sources.

Apart from the stronger peso and the improved fuel mix, the ERC's full approval of Napocor's rate hike petition in April also contributed to the state firm's good performance in 2005, Osorio said.

The ERC in April last year allowed Napocor to hike rates by another 5.56 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh), in addition to the provisional rate increase of 98 centavos per kWh that was granted in September 2004.

This rate hike approval, P1.04 per kWh in all, still fell short of the P1.87-per-kWh that Napocor had asked for. This was enough, however, to boost the state firm's revenues and help it return to profitability.

As for the state firm's financing requirements this year, Osorio said this was still under review.

"We have big payments due this year, the bullet payments for the loans that will mature this year," Osorio said. "Our job is to smoothen our debt management. (The PSALM) board has already approved our schemes for liability management, so we're going to undertake that very soon."

Some $500 million in loans would be falling due in August, Osorio said.

Firms warned over 3rd party fixers

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry's Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines yesterday warned construction firms against using third parties to "facilitate" their applications for licenses due to the proliferation of fake papers.

"A growing number of contractors are entrusting their documentation, filing and follow-ups of their applications to third parties offering liaison services for a certain fee," Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said. "However, we learned that some unscrupulous liaison entities are allegedly (giving the contractors fake licenses)."

The trade chief explained that several firms had been charged by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board for misrepresentation of their technical and financial qualifications in their documents.

The charged firms said their "spurious" documents were produced and submitted to PCAB by liaison agents without their knowledge, Favila said.

The companies also said these third parties charged them exorbitant fees for securing their licenses immediately.

Favila said that, to address the matter, PCAB had adopted a policy to ensure the integrity of license applications and safeguard the quality of license evaluation processes.

Under this policy, PCAB would no longer accept or entertain any transaction related to licenses or registration applications by persons other than the contractors' authorized officers or representatives. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

Republika ng Pilipinas
Republic of the Philippines
KAGAWARAN NG EDUKASYON
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PROCUREMENT SERVICE
Room 508, 5th Floor, Mabini Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City

DepED

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Dep-ED-Bids and Awards Committee (DepED-BAC) invites eligible bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for Supply and Delivery of the following:

Package	Item	Description of Goods	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Pre-Bid Conference	Bid Submission deadline/ Opening of Bids	Price of Bidding Documents (non-refundable)
A	1	Tabulating Stock Forms, 3 ply, size = 11 x 10 5/8 (60 bxs.)	Php45,000.00	April 19, 2006 2:00 P.M.	May 5, 2006 2:00 P.M.	Php1,000.00
	2	Tabulating Stock Forms, 3 ply, size = 11 x 14 7/8 (100 bxs.)	Php110,000.00			
	3	Tabulating Stock Forms, 1 ply, size = 11 x 10 5/8 (500 bxs.)	Php425,000.00			
	4	Tabulating Stock Forms, 1 ply, size = 11 x 14 7/8 (100 bxs.)	Php105,000.00			
B	5	Tabulating Stock Forms, 5 ply, size = 11 x 14 7/8 (1,200 bxs.)	Php1,140,000.00			
C	6	6400 Line Printer Ribbon (PN1040998) (100 rolls)	Php175,000.00			
	7	Cartridge Tape (2GB) for QIC2GB Drive (100 cart.)	Php290,000.00			
	8	Zip Disk (Re-writable) (50 pcs.)	Php27,500.00			
		Total	Php2,317,500.00			

Bids received that exceed the ABC per item shall be rejected.

The Venue for Pre-Bid Conference and Submission and Opening of Bids is at Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal I Bldg. DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City. The End user is the Payroll Services Division (PSD).

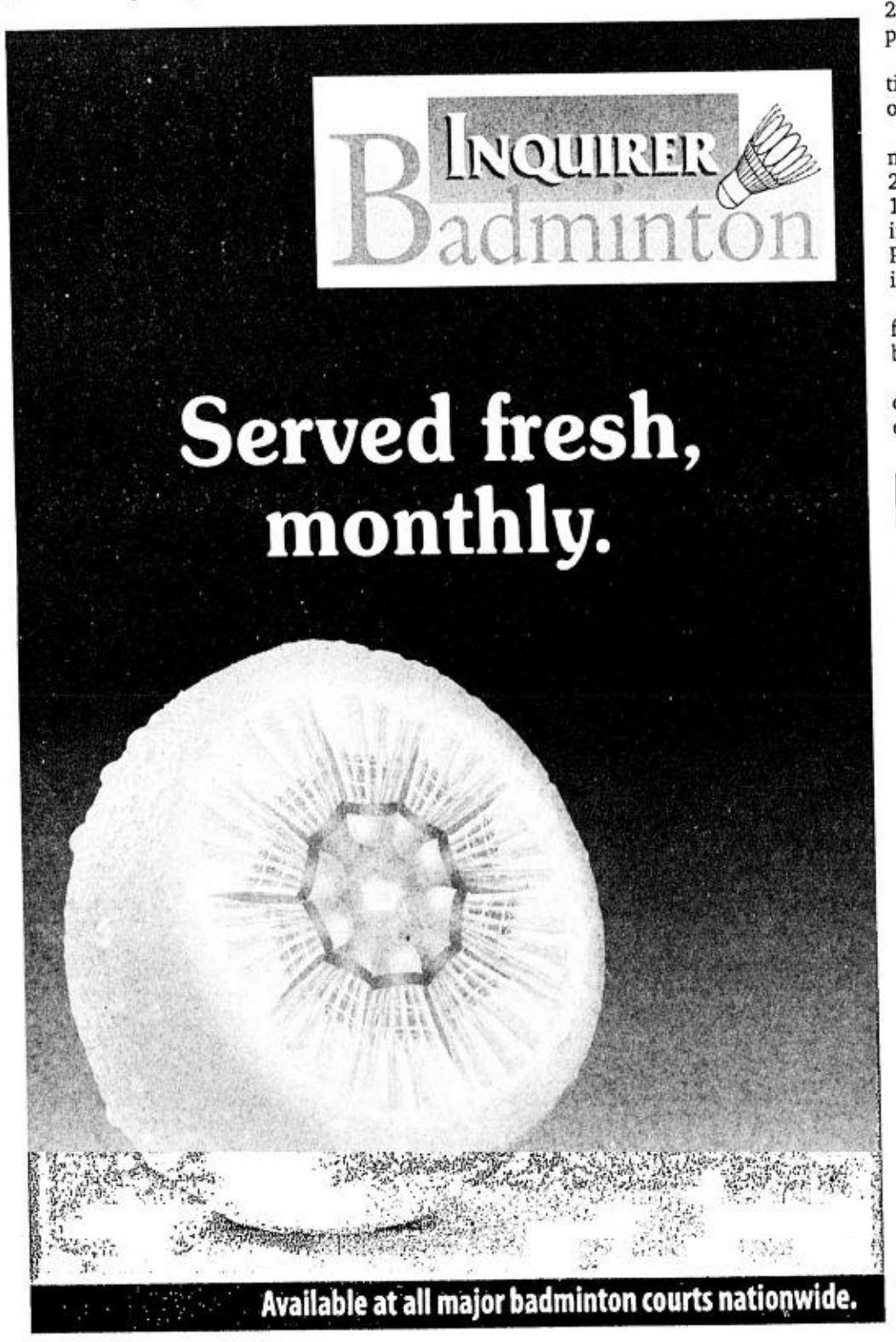
The Bidding Documents in Compact Disc (CD) copy or hard copy shall be available at the BAC Secretariat, Procurement Service, Room 508, 5th Floor, Mabini Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, starting **April 5, 2006** upon payment in cash of non-refundable fee indicated above.

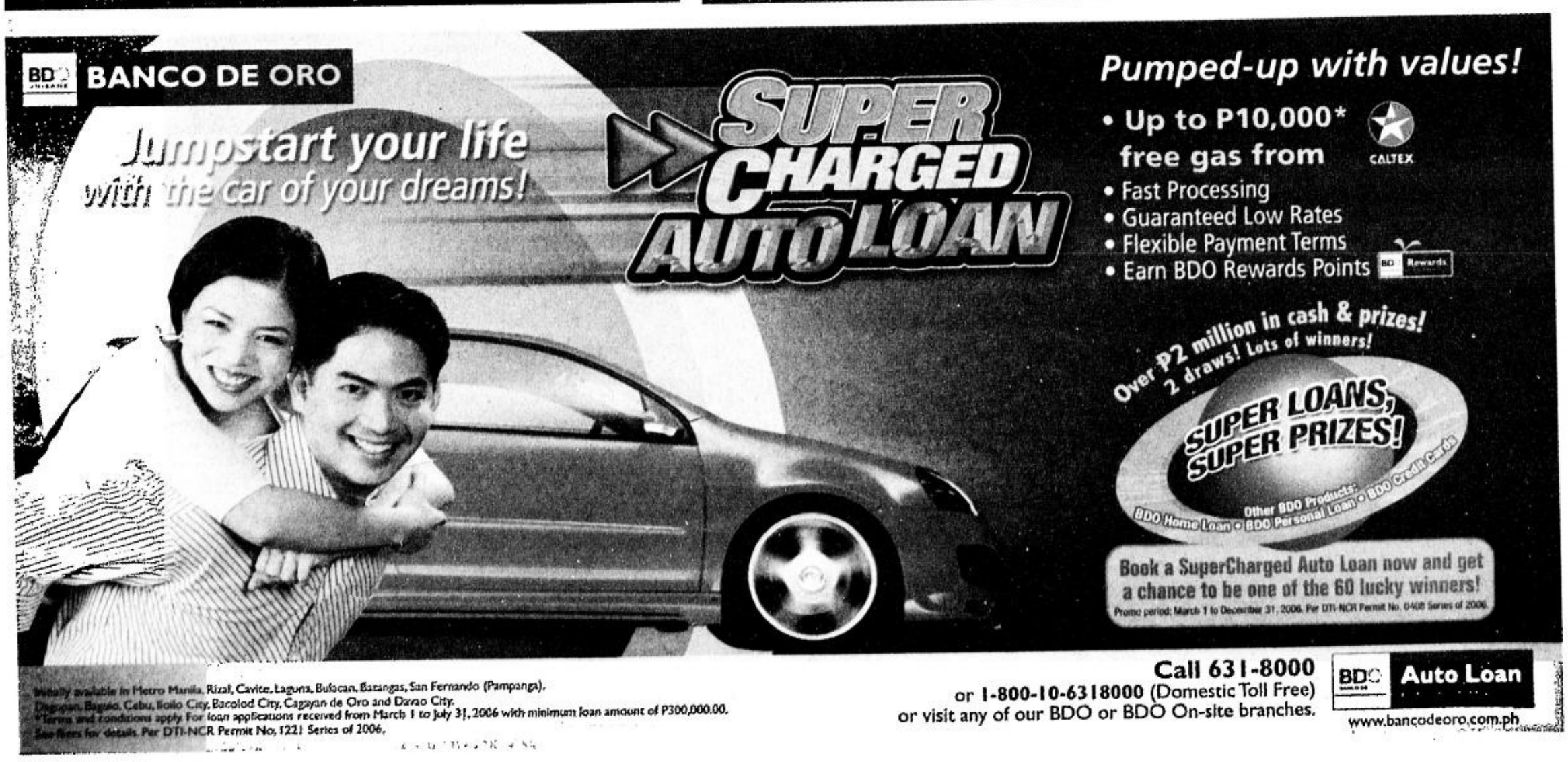
Bidding shall be conducted in accordance with procedures under the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act. Information is also available at http://www.deped.gov.ph or www.procurementservice.org or call DepED-PS at telephone no. 636-65-43 or fax no. 636-65-42.

DepED-BAC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to annul the bidding process, or declare failure of bidding at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected parties.

(Sgd.) Atty. CAMILO MIGUEL M. MONTESA
Assistant Secretary and BAC Chairman

(PDI--Apr. 4 & 11, 2006)





DRINKS can derail weight-loss plans /C4

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

MAGBAYAD NG TAMANG BUWIS bago ang April 17 deadline.

13 DAYS TO GO

Ang Aking Kontribusyon Sa Solusyon

'Hilot' joins the big leagues

The traditional Filipino therapy seeks to harness bio-energies for balance, harmony, health and wellness

By Anne A. Jambora

LONG BEFORE WESTERN MEDICINE BEcame the established form of treatment in the country, there were the *hilot*, *manghihilot* and *albularyo*.

They were revered as healers and communities turned to them for relief from all ailments, minor or life-threatening.

Even as health and wellness became the byword of the new millennium, the traditional Filipino *hilot* remained for the longest time out of the limelight with the world focused on Thai, Swedish or shiatsu massages.

But now, *hilot*, the wellness regimen still practiced in some 42,000 villages in the Philippines, is quietly making its way to the cities, thanks to the efforts of the Department of Tourism (DOT) that made it part of the wellness tourism industry.

The Oriental Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Manila is among the industry players that have added this indigenous wellness regimen to its treatment options.

Bringing in *hilot*, said resident spa consultant Ronald D. Decter, was all about reviving a lost art of Filipino healing that fell victim to the onslaught of modern science.

"*Hilot* is a highly intuitive massage wherein the therapist identifies areas of energy imbalance in the body through touch diagnosis," said Elizabeth F. Nelle, director of product research and development of the DOT.

Customized

Nelle said while many popular massages had predetermined sequences of strokes, *hilot* was customized to the needs of clients. With *hilot*, she said, focus was not limited to the muscle or tissue alone. The therapy also sought to harness bio-energies for balance, harmony, health and wellness.

Bibiano S. Fajardo, president of the Association of Traditional Health Aid Givers, said *hilot* is the manipulation of electrical charges of the body that creates a biochemical reaction where it is needed. Negative nerve points were activated during *hilot* therapy, he said.

A liver, for instance, is supplied with precise electrical activity. If this delicate balance is disrupted and the problem is left unattended, it can lead to disease. Illnesses were manifestations of zero flow or activity of the nerves, Fajardo said.

A chemist by profession, Fajardo said a bout with progressive muscle dystrophy 34 years ago led him to the *manghihilot*. Bedridden for eight months, he tried every possible treatment offered by modern medicine. He said he only got back on his feet and resumed his work after three months of *hilot* sessions. Since then, he added, he made it his personal quest to learn the science behind *hilot*.

"To create a change in the body, we go by biochemical, electrical (urological) or electromagnetic fields (electrical conductivity). *Hilot* is energy manipulation, the science of thermal conductivity that must transfer heat from hot to cold. When this is done properly, the biochemical reaction brings balance once again to the body," Fajardo said.

Natural law

Spotting a fake *hilot* should be easy, Fajardo said. He said anything that did not conform to the natural law would cause pain, so if one felt sore after a *hilot* massage then something was not right.

A blood pressure of 200 must drop to 160 in two minutes, or the *manghihilot* was not well-trained, he added.

One of *hilot's* distinct features is the use of warm strips of banana leaves laced with virgin coconut oil that are applied on the body before and after a session. Nelle said banana leaves were "naturally ionized and (determine) on a molecular level the bio-energy manifested on the skin and body parts."

This touch diagnosis determines what areas of the body have energy imbalance. The therapist then works on a personalized program to restore energy balance and achieve the goal of restoring the normal, natural functions of the body.

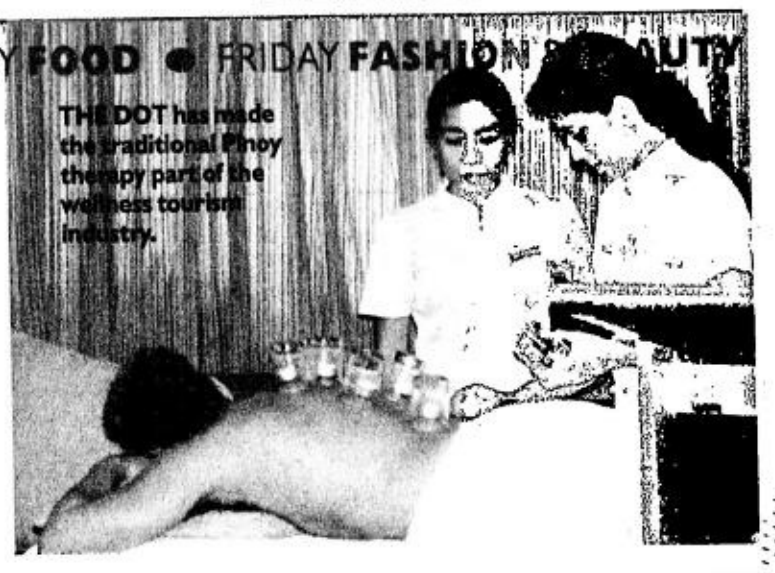
Nelle said *hilot* received recently international recognition. It made it to the roster of Spa Finder's Hot and Getting Hotter List of 2006 trends. Last year it was nominated for Spa Treatment of the Year during the 2005 Baccarat Inaugural Award in Hong Kong.

"In every country, we see a growing appreciation, an awakening, to the value of traditional, natural medicine. The incorporation of [*hilot*] into our spa treatment options is a perfect fit. I believe we should not only provide relaxation, but should also contribute directly to health and well-being," Decter said.

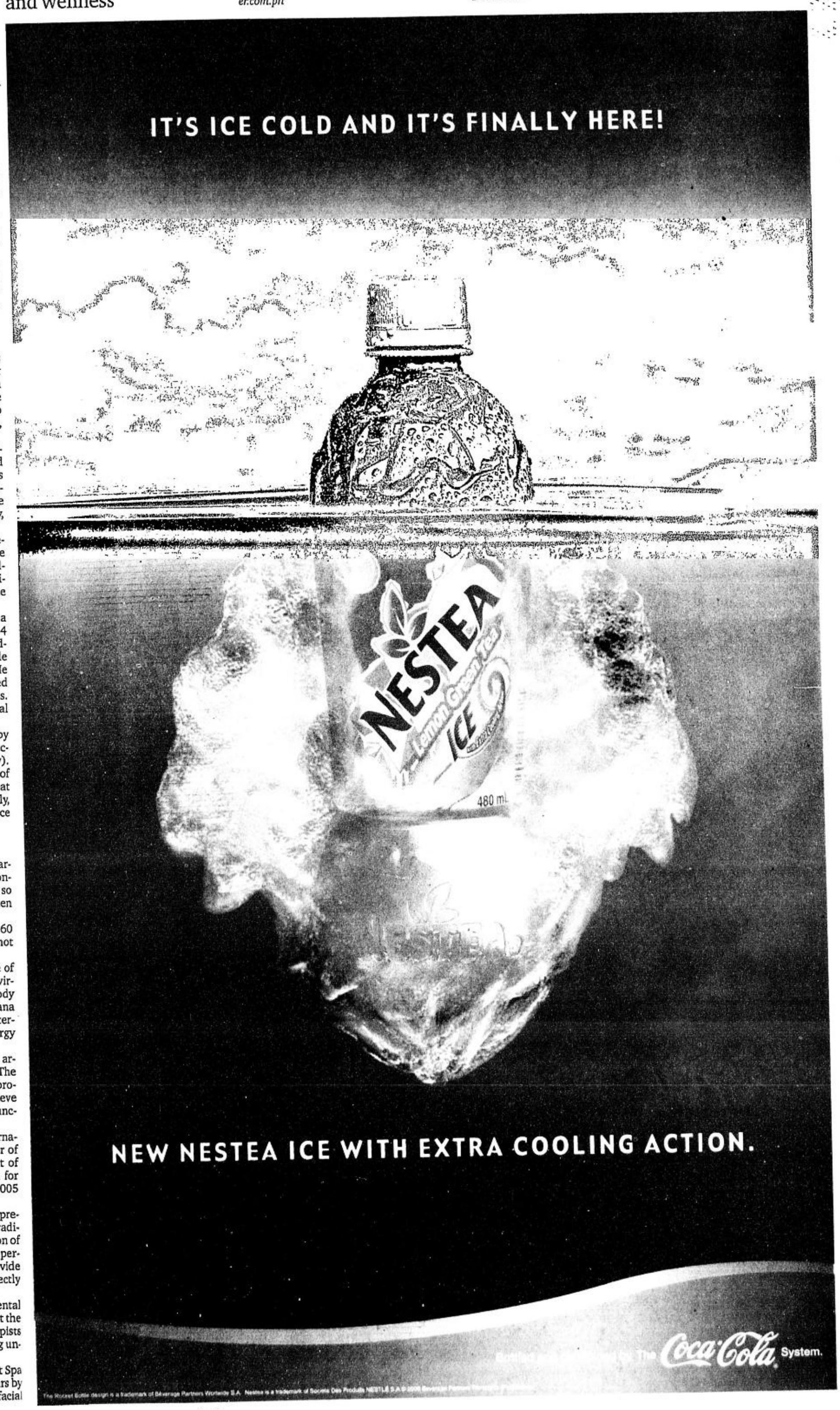
Decter added that guests at The Oriental Spa would be treated to genuine *hilot*, not the "commercial spa massage" type, as therapists themselves underwent months of training under Fajardo.

The Oriental Spa, recognized as the Best Spa in the Philippines for three consecutive years by the Philippine Tatler, also launched new facial products and treatments from Decleor of Paris. Decleor, with over 25 years of experience in aroma-skincare, offers a holistic approach with pure and natural essential oils. It has been nominated for Best European Spa Cosmetic Product during an exhibition in Monte Carlo.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph



THE DOT has made the traditional Pinoy therapy part of the wellness tourism industry.



CLOSE PALS: Sandra Estrella, Kimi Cojuangco, birthday gal Nikki T, and Isabel Cojuangco Suntay

MARIBETH Villanueva, Jerry Kilayko, and hot couple lawyer Bong Valenzuela and Judge Niva Valenzuela

RODORA Nograles, Gina de Venecia and Maria Lourdes Chan Yungco; (standing) Nikki T, Badette Barbers and Lucel Teodoro

A conspiracy is hatched

TOTO Balinghasay, Raffy Prieto and Manolet Lagdameo

MERCEDES Cojuangco Teodoro, Nikki's mom-in-law

SEN. Mar Roxas

MAURO Prieto greets his surprised cousin Nikki Prieto Teodoro a happy birthday.

TOURISM Secretary Ace Durano with Jaime, only son of Nikki and Gilbert

BEAVER Lopez and wife Jackie Ejercito with vivacious Cheska Laurel

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare system

BRILLIANT LAWMAKER Rep. **Gilbert Teodoro** surprised his ladylove, the stunningly gorgeous woman of style and class, **Nikki Prieto**, with an *apres* dinner bash at the Grand Ballroom of the popular InterContinental Manila when she marked another milestone, *palanggas*.

Invitees, who were part of the "conspiracy" started arriving at 8 p.m. Nikki was expected at 10 p.m., after having dinner with her pal **Badette Barbers**. Hotel staff was instructed to turn off the lights in the ballroom when the celebrator was in the vicinity.

But Nikki dashed in 45 minutes early, dahlings, so she was not the only one who got a surprise but also the top conspirator, her husband.

But, typical of our celebrator, she was absolutely delighted to see all her pals. She hopped from table to table as she celebrated another chapter in her beautiful life. Everyone had a blast dancing to the tunes of the '70s and '80s.

For Gilbert and Nikki, both wine connoisseurs and gourmets, the hotel's talented chefs whipped up a memorable menu, *palanggas*.

Check this out! Roast Beef Fillet with Mustard Sauce, Alaskan Smoked Salmon with Horseradish Cream Sauce, Chicken Liver Mousse on Mini Brioche with Grapes, the yummy Mini Mille Feuille with Blue Cheese and Celery, Fettucini Alfredo, Spicy Thai Fish Patties, Shrimp Brochettes, and Homemade Rilette, among others. Choice wine flowed as guests toasted another important milestone in our darling Nikki's life.

This was one Cinderella who didn't dash for home at the stroke of midnight. Our birthday gal blew the candles on her cake and gave a real cool, heartfelt speech, expressing her extreme appreciation to everyone.

Hotshot namedroppable invitees included extremely intelligent House Speaker **Joe de Venecia** and his wife, fashionable **Gina Vera Perez de V.**; Rep. **Charlie Cojuangco**; my *palangga*, **Sandy Ocampo**; **Ed Veloso** and **Jun Rodriguez**; popular happy couple **Beaver Lopez** and his adorable wife **Jackie Ejercito L.**; Sen. **Mar Roxas**, a prospective Philippine president; taipan **Ramon Ang**; lady of ladies **Mercedes Teodoro**; brothers two **Mauro** and **Raffy Prieto**, on a rare night out; **Chito** and **Toni Loyzaga**; Wharton graduate **Antonio Lagdameo**; **Ramon** and **Lydia Ragasa**; **Zeny Yap** and **Bebet Nograles**, plus tons of others who came to wish Nikki Prieto Teodoro only the very best life could offer.

After all, dahlings, life for a woman does start to get *tres, tres* interesting when she is in full bloom, *n'est-ce pas* (as in, *di bala*)?

Rockin' good time

It was one of those super fun gigs at the swinging Greenbelt 3 Level 3, where you could find all you need for a rockin' good time, *palanggas*.

The grand launch party had some of our town's most beautiful stars enjoying the fine dining offerings, and honing their skills behind the counters of Greenbelt 3's unbelievable range of establishments.

Getting the affair rolling was a battle of sweetness between television and print model **Nicole Hernandez** and the stack of yummy Go Nuts Donuts she decorated. MTV's **Don Puno** whipped up his own smoothie at Fuzion. Over at Cold Rock, hot model **Brent Javier** created his own ice cream flavor.

Action was in the bar, *palanggas*, at the National Sports Grill, where hot TV personality **Ram Revilla** created his own cocktails. Tossing a super heathy salad at Blue Ginger was gorgeous and talented bag designer **Amina Aranaz Alunan**.

Model **Paolo Villavicencio** sampled various baked goodies at Cheesecake Etc., trying to guess, blindfolded, their different flavors. At the same time, more cocktail magic was happening at one of my favorites, Fish & Co., where actor **Jeffrey Hidalgo** manned the bar.

Nothing was fresher at the Fresh Bar by Big Chill than model and VJ **Maike Evers**, who demonstrated her brilliance at operating the blenders.

At Fuma!, **Ryan Eigenmann** showed off his portfolio of Zippo tricks. Meanwhile, dahlings, car racer **Gabby de la Merced** hit the virtual tracks as a Daytona racer in Timezone machines scattered around the fun dining area. She tried to outmaneuver Ayala Inc. president **Jim Ayala**.

Top performers and heartthrobs **Jay-R** and **Jimmy Bondoc** rocked the place with their songs. *Naturellement*, beaming with pride and super happy over the smashingly successful event were Ayala Land's brilliant women, shakers and achievers, like **Miriam Katigbak**, **Rowena Tomeldan**, **Cora Dizon**, **Myrna Fernandez**, **CJ Jesena** and **Cathy Bengzon**, plus tons of real hot personalities.

Hey, it's really a triple treat—the most delicious eats, most exciting activities, and last but not the least best shopping one can have, all at the awesome Greenbelt 3 Level 3. But where else, *palanggas*?

Another wedding

Pretty-pretty and extremely intelligent **Patricia "Pat" Kierulf** is a graduate of Brent School and St. Benilde DLSU. She is now finishing her graduate studies at AIM. Her new husband is good-looking **Francisco Roberto "Coco" Mauricio**, a hot business executive at Johnson & Johnson. A graduate of Ateneo, he has an MBA from UCLA, no less, *palanggas*.

Pat K. is the daughter of **Joey** and **Dina Kierulf**; Coco is the son of **Marife** and **Antonio Mauricio**.

A fun *despedida de soltera*, as in farewell to singlehood, was hosted by the bride-elect's aunt, charity-civic worker and socialite **Jojo K. Zabarte**, at her residence in Villa Verde.

Hey, there sure is an exodus to the altar, dahlings, by the pretty Kierulf gals. Only last year it was **Kitty K.** saying "I do" to **Franco Limjuco**, followed by **Pat K. Casey K.** will have her altar date in January 2007, followed by **Dianne K. Fletcher** in April in New Orleans, then **Katrina K.** in New York City.

Pat K. and Coco Mauricio had a two-month whirlwind courtship. It was love at first sight and they decided not to wait, *palanggas*. They exchanged marriage vows March 18 in exotic Bangkok, Thailand, where Coco works, *palanggas*.

PATRICIA "Pat" Kierulf and Francisco Roberto "Coco" Mauricio say their "I dos" in Bangkok, Thailand.

BEAUTIES: Nicole Hernandez, Tina Trillana and Amina Aranaz Alunan

POWER BUNCH: Rep. Ed Veloso, JJ Romualdo, House Speaker Jose de Venecia, business magnate Henry Cojuangco and Rep. Jesli Lapus

BEAUTIFUL couple Rep. Miguel Zubiri and Audrey Tan Z., with Ayala's Javier Hernandez

THE SURPRISED birthday gal, stunningly beautiful Nikki Prieto, is welcomed by the host of the dinner party, Rep. Gilbert Teodoro.

IT'S THE GANG: Choy Cojuangco, Louie Ysmael, the host Gilbert Teodoro and Mari Lagdameo; (standing) Butch Lagdameo and Ram Antonio

MAIKE Evers and Don Puno

CHEESE Ledesma and Christine Laman

AC Ocampo and man for all seasons Ben Chan

HOTSHOTS Jim Ayala and Bill Stelton

EYE-CATCHING Gaby de la Merced

More than just a spa

By Irene C. Perez

WE ARE A TIRED bunch, stressed by traffic, deadlines and the political hullabaloo. And we need a li'l pampering every now and then.

A soothing massage is always a welcome thing, a balm for a broken spirit especially when done by a licensed pro.

Amezcua, the first urban medi-spa in the country, aims to recharge your weary body, mind and spirit with professional treatments that marry Eastern and Western technologies, ancient and modern medicine.

A medi-spa is practically a medical clinic within a spa. Unlike your *suki* spa, it has qualified physicians and certified trained health professionals to perform diagnostic procedures. You could have your body scrub, blood analysis, facial and iridology all in one place.

And oh, they even have a shrink.

Anxiety and depression—whether caused by PMS (premenstrual syndrome) or a deeper clinical issue—could sure make you crazy in more ways than one.

"If you think you need to talk to a psychiatrist but hate going to a real clinic for fear of being stigmatized, Amezcua has an in-house psychiatrist to help you," said medical director Dr. Edwin Arellano Bien.

Not run-of-the-mill

With every place that has a sauna, a couple of beds and a *hilot* calling itself a spa; and every place with a set of dumbbells and treadmills declaring itself a gym, the medi-spa promises to be different.

Amezcua gives you the assurance it is truly qualified to promote health and well-being. Located at the heart of White Plains, Quezon City, the exclusive 120-square meter establishment has state-of-the-art facilities, mini-clinics, massage and therapy rooms, fitness studio, meditation hut, café and gift shop.

For some serious pampering, there's the Sabai Stone Massage—a calming synchronized massage using warm granite stones for that combo of heat, firmness and rhythm.

The Green Coffee Cocoon treatment wards off cellulite by eliminating toxins and impurities while the Aroma Moor aromatic treatment uses black Moor mud to enhance cell production and stimulation.

Sheer bliss is the Amezcua Serenity Seaweed Wrap that combines three kinds of seaweeds, all rich in proteins, minerals and vitamins for getting rid of toxins and boosting metabolism. The Amezcua Body Polish buffs your dull skin back to its natural sheen, then gives rich hydration for cell renewal.

For something traditional, there's Dagdagay, an age-old Filipino acupuncture treatment to help boost the immune system.

Dance, yoga, pilates and tai chi classes are conducted at Body Quest Studio. You can use the wet/dry sauna and Meditation Kubo for some quiet time.

Alternative health care

"[Amezcua] aims to develop and implement an ethical and sustainable model for holistic health market worldwide," said general manager Renu Gidoomal.

Of Indian descent, she was born and raised in London where she earned a degree in Holistic Therapeutic Massage. She maintains an alternative medicine clinic there.

Alternative treatments at Amezcua include reflexology and Chinese acupuncture for pain management.

There's also cupping—small glass cups are used to create a "vacuum" in the back and show blood flow to different body organs. Iris analysis shows inherent physical strengths and weaknesses. Body terrain analysis evaluates relationship of saliva, blood and urine to determine health level.

Other treatments are live blood analysis, meridian stress assessment, lymphatic drainage, lymphatic facial and colonic hydrotherapy.

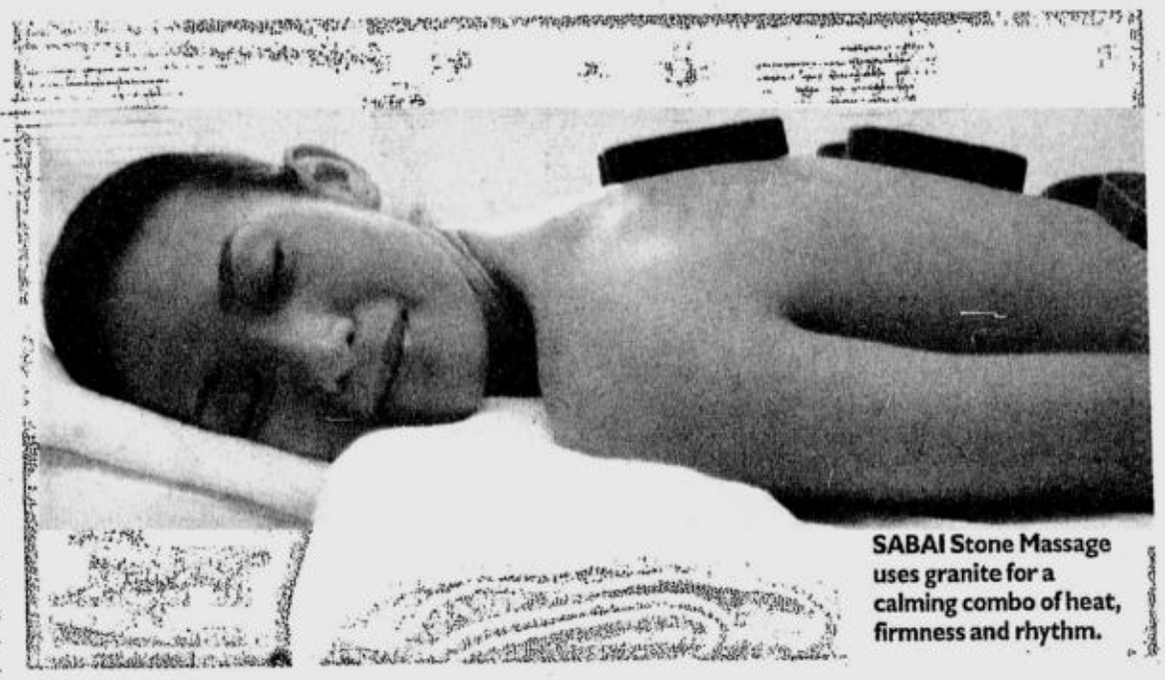
If you want to lose weight safely and gradually, a physical therapist prepares a program and a nutritionist tailor-makes a diet for you. Colonics treatment flushes out toxins from your intestines for a sound metabolism.

Amezcua uses only laboratory-tested, all-natural Penovia products. They are hypoallergenic and non-comedogenic (won't block pores), free of chemicals, dyes, perfumes, alcohol, lanolin and mineral oils.

After a relaxing treatment, you can treat yourself to a healthy snack at the vegetarian café offering organic fresh juices, herbal teas, salads, sandwiches and pasta. A gift shop sells spa products, accessories, candles, CDs, yoga mats and nutritional supplements.

For now, Amezcua is open only to members. Packages are available for P30,000, P50,000 and P80,000 with an opening offer of P15,000. It hopes to be able to eventually accept walk-in clients.

Amezcua Medi-spa is at 122 Katipunan Ave., White Plains, QC. Call 9118075 or 9118245.



SABAI Stone Massage uses granite for a calming combo of heat, firmness and rhythm.

ALTERNATIVE healing like acupuncture is done by medical doctors at the medi-spa.

AMEZCUA offers yoga, pilates, tai chi, meditation and dance.

Latest cleansing and detox procedures

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE AWARE of it, the race for the most complete supplement and the best beauty regimen has been on for the longest time.

Despite massive advertisements offering the most perfect skin and complexion, the strongest and most appealing body, one truth remains. You have to start from the inside for the outside to look good.

One of the best ways to care for the inside is to cleanse it. There are many forms of cleansing or detoxification. Here are some of the latest you may want to consider:

Ion cleansing footbath

Notox aims to flush the toxins from your system in one sitting. We are exposed to harmful toxins each day. They are in the air we breathe, which is polluted; the beverages we take that have ingredients with chemicals and additives; the processed food we ingest that contains preservatives and coloring, etc.

Without detoxification, toxins build up in our bodies until we suffer from overload. It is logical that overload leads to sickness. To prevent an accumulation of harmful elements, toxins must be flushed out.

Popular in the United States, Notox comes to Manila via the Therapeutic Ion Cleansing Footbath, a 30-minute treatment that is painless, safe and convenient.

A revolutionary detox method, the footbath involves the use of a device that generates a stream of positive and negative ions. The device is placed in the basin and the resulting ions attract and attach themselves to oppositely charge toxic particles, gently drawing them out of the body through the pores of the feet. Results are visible within minutes.

You will actually see the excess fat/cholesterol, salt, chemical yeast that your body has stored. The color of the toxins released corresponds with the organ affected—liver, blood, kidney, bladder, etc.

Even serious health enthusiasts can secrete toxic waste. The feeling during Notox is relaxation. Some actually sense a mild current running through their bodies, others just feel relaxed/sleepy and thirsty afterward.

Complete cleansing takes 8-10 sessions. For home service, call 0920-8305638.

Aromatherapy massage

There is aromatherapy and there is aromatherapy. But a new, more pure, more natural treatment has arrived.

In 1974, Solange Dessimouli and Caroline Colleard founded Decleor now considered the number one aromatherapy brand in the world. It was bought by Shiseido in 2000 (known here as Luxasia).

Decleor's Aromessence products are essential oils derived from parts of aromatic plants such as flowers, fruits, roots, leaves, bark or seeds. Every essential oil has its own healing power that cannot be duplicated through human means.

The oils penetrate the skin because of their tiny molecules and have antibacterial and antiseptic properties. They stimulate white blood cells; aid in elimination of waste products and toxins; help hormone secretions; relieve stress, mental/emotional anxiety; and relax the body.

The Decleor system has a two-step approach: 1) Treat the skin with non-oily Aromessence; 2) Protect the skin via its Phyto-skincare product.

The system caters to both men and women. It is available at the Mandarin Oriental Spa of the Mandarin Hotel, known for its excellent spa services and treatments. Call 7508888.

Your home spa

You can turn your home into a mini spa. Begin by:

- Cleaning and tidying up your bathroom
- Adding plants in every nook
- Placing scented candles near your bath tub area
- Playing soft music at bath time to put you in a state of calm
- Having reading materials by your toilet seat, preferably positive and uplifting stuff
- Always having a vase with a fresh flower by your bedside. The sight of a flower has a calming effect on the mind.

Affirmation:

"I am like water, cool and calm."

Love and light!

Join my Health and Beauty Day, April 8, Ayala Alabang Cuenca Park Community Center. Call 8070501.

Text CQ 2966 for Smart for your daily health and beauty updates.

P1.7 M raised for indigent PGH patients

THE PHILIPPINE GENERAL Hospital auction, "Sining at Awit," raised over P1.7 million for indigent patients of the Philippines' biggest charity medical institution.

Auctioned during the event held at Manila Polo Club's Main Lounge were works donated by the country's foremost Filipino artists.

Among the donors were Napoleon Abueva, Augusto Albor, Manuel Baldemor, Mauro "Malang" Santos, Araceli Dans, Lito Carating, Valeria Cavestany, Arturo Luz, Juvenal Sanso, Nestor Vinluan and Phyllis Zaballero. A work by Romulo Olazo was donated Dr. Danny David.

Also auctioned were vacation packages, dinner passes in luxurious hotels and other art pieces.

The event was attended by Dr. Carmelo Alfiler, PGH director; Dr. Greg Alvior, president of the PGH Medical Foundation Inc.; Jenny Zamora, PGH Foundation board member who came with her family.

Among those who bid for the artworks were Kit Kat Zobel, Marianne Po, lawyer Tonito Gonzalez and wife Eileen, Chit Salud, Gerry Contreras, Fred Sarabia, Prescy Ramos, Marc Licaros, Dr. Claver Ramos, Michael Liew, and Daniel Paragas.

Hosted by Tim Yap and Cory Quirino, the event featured performers Pinky Marquez, Ricky Davao, Buddy Soul and a string quartet.

The annual fundraiser is organized by Alvior, foundation chair Lolita Escobar-Mirpuri, vice chair Zamora, and overall chair for the "Alay sa PGH" fund campaign Quirino.

Proceeds will support the foundation's program for indigent patients, including "Adopt a Ward" which aims to renovate the hospital's 16 charity wards.

Event sponsors were American Express Card, Zuellig Pharmaceuticals, Filipino Star Printing, San Miguel Corp. and BMW. To contribute to PGH projects, call 5362874 or 5218450 loc. 3061, or visit www.pghmedfoundation.org.

PGH MEDICAL Foundation's Lolita Mirpuri, Dr. Napoleon and Sergia Abueva, PGH Medical Foundation president Dr. Greg Alvior

Mary Magdalene, the woman Jesus loved

(Part I)

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

THIS LENTEN SEASON, I WOULD LIKE TO focus not on Jesus Christ, but on the woman he loved, Mary Magdalene, a mysterious woman who was much misunderstood, maligned, ignored and marginalized by the Christian church.

To me, Mary Magdalene stands taller than any of the apostles of Jesus. She was the "Apostle of Apostles" to whom was revealed the greatest spiritual mysteries after the resurrection of Jesus.

She was mentioned only a few times in the canonical gospels of Luke, Mark, Mathew and John. But her importance in Christ's mission cannot be denied.

She was present during the most crucial moments in Jesus' life. It was Mary Magdalene who anointed Jesus with a most expensive perfumed oil, thus fulfilling his being called The Anointed One. She was present during the crucifixion and she was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection.

Who was this woman that the early Church mistakenly branded as a "repentant prostitute" and relegated to the footnotes of history? What did she represent that the church tried so hard to eradicate?

Wealthy

To be sure, not much is known about the background of Mary Magdalene. Modern research and educated guess work suggest she was a very wealthy woman, probably from a place in Africa called Magdala.

Other theories say she was from Egypt and some say she was from a town in the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. But she most definitely was not a prostitute, as commonly believed. There is absolutely no biblical basis for it.

Where did the idea of Mary Magdalene's being a prostitute start? This false label stemmed from a homily of Pope Gregory in the year 591 where he declared that she and the unnamed woman in Luke VII were, in fact, one and the same, and the faithful should hold Mary as a penitent whore.

Here is the pertinent portion of that historic homily with the erroneous notion about Mary Magdalene:

"She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark. And what did these seven devils signify, if not all the vices? ... It is clear, brothers, that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts."

In 1969, the Catholic church officially corrected Pope Gregory's error of labeling Mary Magdalene a penitent whore. However, almost nobody paid any attention to the correction.

The Christian community, by and large, persisted in regarding her as a former prostitute. One would expect the Catholic clergy to lead the way in correcting the false impression of Mary Magdalene but that has not happened.

Was there a deliberate attempt by the church to marginalize Mary Magdalene, as Dan Brown's immensely popular novel, "The Da Vinci Code," suggested? Though vehemently denied by church apologists, there seemed to be some historical evidence for this.

Why would the church want to downplay Mary Magdalene's role? What could be its motive?

Based on his consultations with other writers, like Margaret Starbird ("The Woman in the Alabaster Jar"), Lyn Picknett ("Mary Magdalene"), Elaine Pagels ("The Gnostic Gospels"), and Michael Baignet, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln ("Holy Blood, Holy Grail"), Brown theorized, "Mary Magdalene represents a woman who is freed from sexual repression, who is not dependent upon a male-only hierarchy, and who fulfills her desires through confident individualism, not repentance and submission."

All about power

In other words, this is about power and the recognition that sexuality is a fundamental element of power. According to Susan Haskins, "What the church feared and abhorred the most was that which is incarnated in the flesh of the woman, her sexuality, and so made Mary Magdalene a repentant whore in order to rob her of that power."

In 1945, a whole library of ancient papyrus writings containing lost gospels written in the Coptic language was discovered inside jars in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt. The most well-known of these writings was the Gospel of Thomas. But it also contained the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary, which asserted that the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ was more than casual.

The main theory behind the "Da Vinci Code" novel is that Jesus and Mary were married and she bore him a child in France where she fled with Martha, Lazarus and John after the resurrection.

The Holy Grail was not the cup that Jesus used during the Last Supper, but the royal blood of Christ that must be protected. The church was said to be behind a conspiracy to keep this secret at all cost even to the point of deception and murder.

That's why the Catholic church is all up and against this work of fiction. It has reason to be alarmed because Brown's book has sold 25 million copies worldwide and is more popular than the Bible.

Although there is absolutely no historical basis or evidence that Jesus was ever married to Mary Magdalene, or that they had children, as some writers theorized, there is enough written and documentary evidence suggesting they were most likely lovers. During the early period of Christianity, it was no secret that Magdalene was not only his constant companion but his dearly beloved.

Next week: Documentary evidence that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were lovers

Drinks can make or break weight-loss plans

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

WHEN IT COMES TO WEIGHT loss, what you drink is just as important as what you eat.

A new study has found that beverages compose 20 percent of daily caloric intake and 50 percent of excess calories consumed daily (statistics for Americans aged 2 and above).

These are beverages like soft and fruit drinks, smoothies and specialty coffees.

Liquid calories can contribute to weight gain because they are not as obvious as food calories. People will usually eat less when they have had too many calories but they don't make any adjustments even if they have drunk the same amount of calories.

Nutritionists like Barry Popkin believe consumers need to be aware of what they drink. He headed a study published last month in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition that proposed a Beverage Guidance System (BGS) similar to the food pyramid.

He writes, "A healthy diet does not rely on fluids to provide energy or nutrient needs. Therefore, potable water could be used to fulfill almost all the fluid needs of healthy individuals. However, to allow for variety and individual preferences, healthful diets may include several other types of beverages."

The BGS has six levels from "most preferred" (level 1) to "least preferred" (level 6) in terms of calorie content and health benefits. Eight ounces is the standard portion size.

No or few calories

The bottom line recommendation is "that the consumption of beverages with no or few calories should take precedence over the consumption of beverages with more calories."

Level 1: Water

Women should drink nine glasses of fluid a day while men should drink 13 glasses. Ideally, water should account for majority of fluid needs (the BGS recommends at least 60 percent).

Level 2: Tea and coffee

Unsweetened tea and coffee have zero calories and various health benefits. Tea may help enhance the immune system, increase bone density, reduce tooth decay, reduce kidney stones and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Non-caffeinated herbal teas like ginger, chamomile and peppermint are also calorie-free and have their own specific health benefits.

Coffee may help reduce the risk of type-2 diabetes and Parkinson's disease (in men). Moderate consumption (up to 400 mg of caffeine or four cups of coffee) by healthy individuals will not increase the risk of heart disease, hypertension, osteoporosis (brittle bones) or high cholesterol. However, boiled unfiltered coffee can raise total and LDL cholesterol.

Coffee consumption of up to 500 mg daily will not cause dehydration or chronic water imbalance.

Gourmet or specialty coffees loaded with extras like sugar, whole milk, cream and chocolate should be considered similar to desserts—high-calorie treats to have only occasionally.

Level 3: Milk and soy

Nonfat (skim) and low-fat (1-percent) milk or yogurt drinks are sources of calcium, Vitamin D and high-quality protein. Soy is an alternative for those who are lactose intolerant or have trouble digesting milk from animal sources.

Whole milk is not recommended by the BGS (except for children below the age of 2) because of its higher calorie and fat content (150 calories compared to 80 calories for nonfat milk).

Level 4: Artificially sweetened beverages

"Diet" drinks provide sweetness without the calories and, therefore, in terms of weight loss, would be preferable to drinks with calories. However, the BGS points out two areas that need further research: the safety of long-term use of artificial sweeteners and the theory that diet drinks may increase sugar cravings.

Level 5: Juices, sports drinks, alcohol

The BGS recommends eating whole fruits and vegetables instead of taking them in juice form because of the increased caloric content and decreased fiber content.

Sports drinks are only recommended for endurance athletes or those involved in strenuous activities lasting more than 60 minutes under hot and sweaty conditions (when sweat rate is greater than 8 liters per day). Regular exercisers don't need the extra calories.

Alcohol consumption should be limited to one drink per day for women and two drinks for men.

Level 6: Soft drinks, fruit drinks

The least recommended drinks are those sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup or sucrose. These include soft drinks and fruit drinks (sweetened beverages with very little real juice). These drinks are high in calories but low in nutrient value.

Acceptable range

According to the BGS, these are the acceptable ranges for 98 oz of fluid per day:

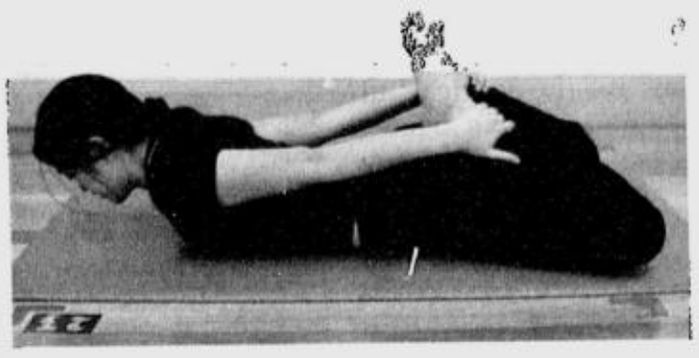
- Water: 20-50 oz per day
- Unsweetened tea or coffee: 0-40 oz per day (more than 32 oz of coffee can affect water balance)
- Low-fat/skim milk and soy beverages: 0-16 oz per day
- Diet drinks: 0-32 oz per day
- 100-percent fruit juices: 0-8 oz
- Soft and fruit drinks: 0-8 oz

To read the complete study, go to http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/full/83/3/529.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

The bow



THIS YOGA-INSPIRED exercise stretches the abdomen, the front of the shoulders and the front of the hips and thighs.

Equipment

Exercise mat

Exercise technique

1. Lie on your stomach, bend your knees, and reach backward to hold your ankles or shins.

2. Contract the muscles between your shoulder blades as well as your buttocks to initiate the movement.

3. Use your arms to help hold you in position.

Performance tips

1. Keep your legs apart if your back is not so flexible. Otherwise, keep the legs together.

2. Make sure to start the movement with the contraction of the muscles at the back of your body and not by pulling on your legs with your arms.

Repetition

Hold for five breaths (one breath equals an inhalation and an exhalation). Do once or twice.

MEDICard, The Healthcare I Deserve!

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What are the most common childhood malignancies?

Acute Leukemia is the leading cancer affecting children in the Philippines and usually defined as more than 25% blast cells in the bone marrow. There are two types, the lymphocytic and the myeloblastic. The acute lymphocytic leukemia accounts for 80% of all leukemias in childhood. In this condition, there is uncontrolled proliferation of malignant hematopoietic cells leading to generalized involvement of the blood forming marrow spaces. Secondary abnormalities of cell differentiation, proliferation or both lead to excessive infiltration and accumulation of lymphoblasts with resultant organomegaly and organ failure. Tumors of the central nervous system is the 2nd most common group of malignant neoplasms in childhood. The tumors may occur at any age but are most frequent between 5 and 10 years of age. Most clinical manifestations of brain tumors are the result of increased intracranial pressure, like persistent headaches, early morning vomiting, nausea, impaired vision, enlarging head, seizures, etc. Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma is the 3rd most common malignancy of childhood. It is a heteregenous group of disease that has a common central abnormality, uncontrolled and abnormal proliferation of cells that normally populate the lymphatic system. Disease progression occurs by dissemination of the malignant cells via the lymphatic circulation. Involvement of bone marrow and blood occurs as a late event of an advanced disease.

This week's answer to our feature question was provided by our medical service provider from Laguna, Dr. Trinidad T. Tapia. Dra. Debbie is specializes in Pediatric Hematology and Oncology. She is a graduate of medicine from University of Sto. Tomas in 1982. She obtained her residency training for Pediatrics from UP-PGH Medical Center and later took her subspecialty training for Pediatric Hematology & Oncology in 1990 at the same institution. Dr. Tapia is a fellow of the Philippine Pediatric Society, Philippine Society of Pediatric Oncology and the Philippine Society of Medical Oncology. MEDICard members may visit her for consultation services at Colombo Doctors' Hospital, Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays from 5pm-7pm and Saturdays 2pm-4pm and at St. James Hospital, Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays 10am-12noon.

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

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Foot comfort means right socks

ENJOY YOUR FAVORITE SPORT OR fitness regimen without worrying about developing blisters, calluses and fungal growth.

Thorlos socks from the United States take care of seven points of foot weaknesses—moisture, pressure, shear, circulation, temperature, posture and stimulus.

The scientifically designed socks are padded to cushion the foot and have four-channeled cross-section fibers that produce a soft, cotton-like yarn with superior moisture transport qualities. Tissue breakdown, calluses, blisters and fungal growth are prevented.

Thorlos has socks for specific activities and sports such as basketball, running, men's fitness, light running, walking, tennis, badminton, women's fitness, dress and casual.

Thorlos socks are available at Rustan's, Planet Sports, Royal Sporting House, The Athlete's Foot and Toby's.

THORLOS socks are scientifically designed for different activities.

Promo deadline

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF entries to the Challenge the Bert Lozada Swim School (BLSS) is on April 18, 6 p.m.

Free swimming lessons will be given to 15 Metro Manila readers who will submit the best essays on how much they fear the water and why they would like to conquer that fear.

The promo is jointly sponsored by BLSS and the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

Call the INQUIRER Marketing Department, 8978808 loc. 259 or 263; or the BLSS at 0917-700SWIM (7946), 5891982, 5635532 and 5628041.

Radiology in children's diagnosis

CHILDREN ARE NOT SMALL ADULTS.

They cannot go through certain medical procedures the same way as grownups. This is particularly true with radiation and other imaging techniques for diagnosing diseases.

Youngsters' immune systems are still immature so a different approach to therapy and care is required for young patients.

Dr. Bernard Laya, a United States-trained pediatric radiologist, has started a training program at the St. Luke's Medical Center to develop imaging standards and guidelines for Pediatric Radiology.

As a pediatric radiologist, Laya is an expert in the diagnosis of illnesses in infants, children and young adults using imaging like X-ray, ultrasound, computerized tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and nuclear imaging.

Even in adult patients, there are safety concerns with regards to the use of radiation. Special attention is even more important when dealing with children as they are much more susceptible to radiation risks than older people.

In pediatric imaging, it is a must to check the appropriateness of the procedure being performed. Set guidelines should be strictly observed, including the use of the least amount of radiation.

The SLMC's Institutes of Radiology and Pulmonary Medicine conducted recently a forum on important clinical and radiologic issues, with special focus on pediatric infection. The forum followed recent reports of a resurgence of tuberculosis worldwide, with almost half of infections occurring in Asia and Africa. A World Health Organization study said many new cases involved children younger than 15 years old. The Philippines ranked seventh among 22 countries with a high TB incidence.

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